

In Another Day of the Lord

The Mission Days of the Mennonite Brethren
Church Of India in Pictures

Paul D. Wiebe
David A. Wiebe

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Compiled and Annotated by Paul D. Wiebe and
David A. Wiebe

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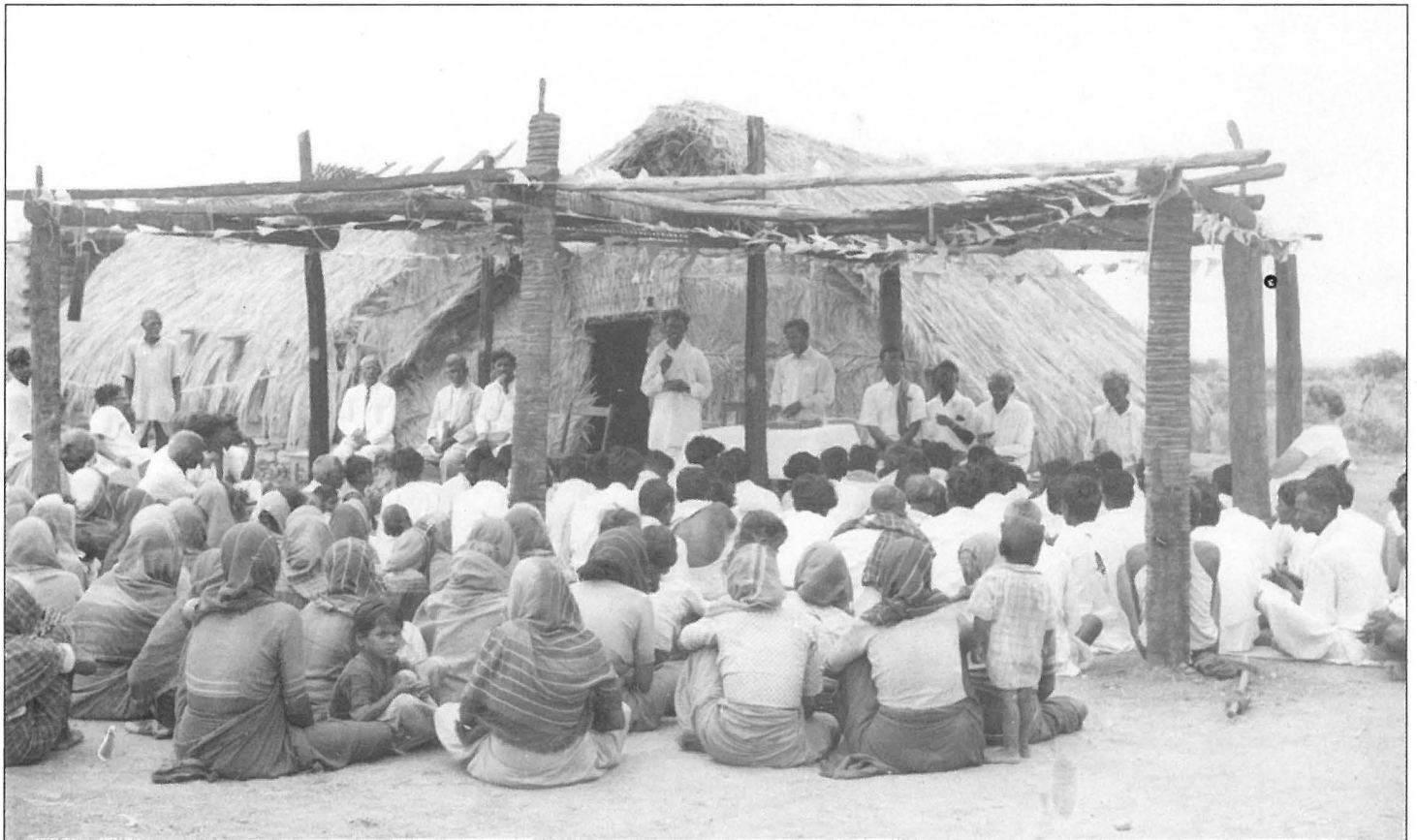
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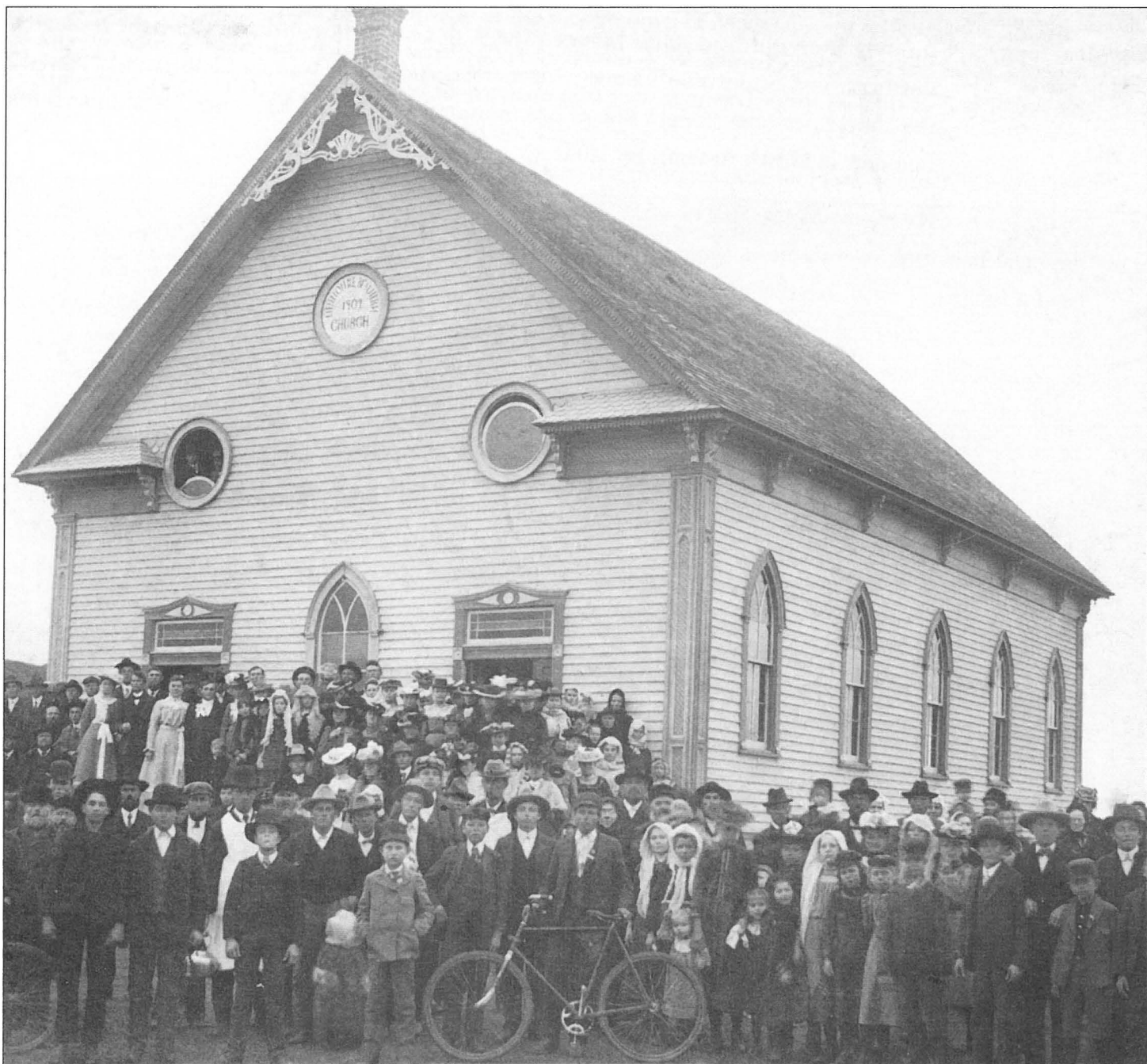
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The missionary Bergthold camp at a site near the Krishna River in the early 1940s. (CMBS Fresno)



Villagers listen to the Gospel message under a temporary shelter in front of their thatch-roofed church building, 1963. (CMBS Fresno)



The South Mennonite Brethren Church and its congregation, Fairview, Oklahoma, early 1900. (CMBS Fresno)

Isaiah 40: 29-31 (NIV): He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.

I Peter 2: 9-10 (NIV): But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



The church/school building in Nagarkurnool about 1915. (CMBS Fresno)

యెషయా 40: 29-31: సొమ్మసిల్లినవారికి బలమిచ్చువాడు ఆయనే శక్తిహీనులకు బలాభివృద్ధి కలుగజేయువాడు ఆయనే బాలురు సొమ్మసిల్లుదురు అలయుదురు యౌవనస్థులు తప్పక తొట్రిల్లుదురు యెహోవాకొరకు ఎదురుచూచువారు నూతన బలము పొందుదురు వారు పక్షిరాజులవలె రెక్కలు చాపి పైకి ఎగురుదురు అలయక పరుగెత్తుదురు సొమ్మసిల్లక నడిచిపోవుదురు.

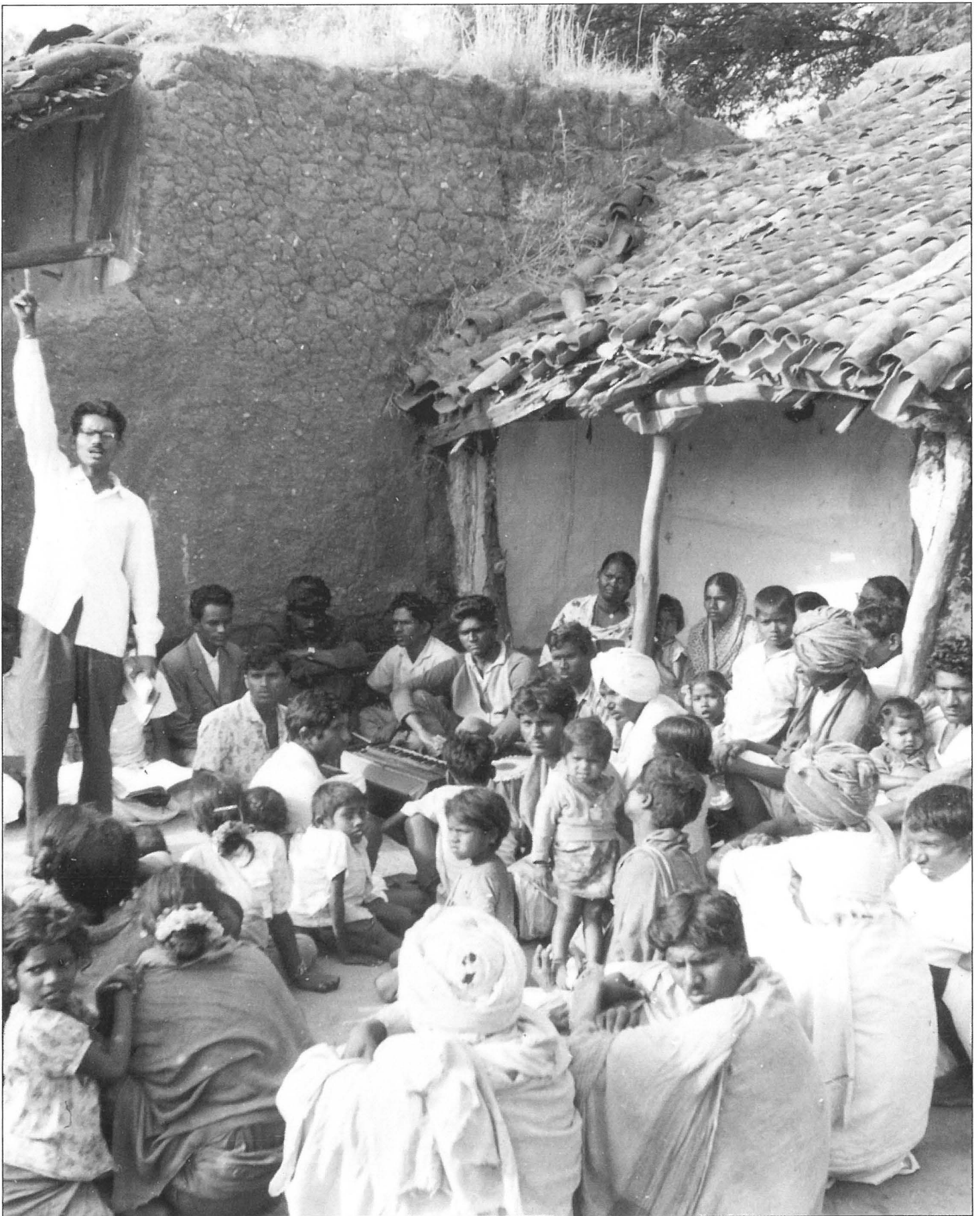
1 పేతురు 2: 9-10: అయితే మీరు చీకటిలోనుండి ఆశ్చర్యకరమైన తన వెలుగులోనికి మిమ్మును పిలిచిన వాని గుణాతిశయములను ప్రచురముచేయు నిమిత్తము, ఏర్పరచబడిన వంశమును, రాజులైన యాజకసమూహమును, పరిశుద్ధజనమును, దేవుని సొత్తయిన ప్రజలునై యున్నారు. ఒకప్పుడు ప్రజగా ఉండక యిప్పుడు దేవుని ప్రజయైతిరి, ఒకప్పుడు కనికరింపబడక యిప్పుడు కనికరింపబడినవారైతిరి.



Participants at the General Conference meeting in the Henderson, Nebraska, Mennonite Brethren Church, 1927. (CMBS Fresno)



Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India, Shamsabad, 1954. (CMBS Fresno)



Rev. V. K. Rufus preaching at a village gathering near Shamsabad, about 1956. (CMBS Fresno)

In Another Day of the Lord

Is dedicated to the memory of

The missionaries of the early Mennonite Brethren church in India, Russian, North American and Indian alike, who preached and lived the good news of the gospel

And among these, in particular, our parents John A. and Viola C. (Bergthold) Wiebe, our grandparents Daniel F., Katharina (Mandtler), Anna (Epp) and Anna (Suderman) Bergthold and our great uncle and aunt Nicolai N. and Susie (Wiebe) Hiebert

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"A line of hungry boarding school girls waiting for their noon meal," Wanaparthi mission compound, 1953. (CMBS Fresno)



Boys lining up before the start of a school day, Mabbubnagar mission compound, 1952. (CMBS Fresno)

Preface and Acknowledgements

The first Mennonite Brethren (MB) missionaries to India came from Ukraine in what was then Russia in 1889. The first from North America came from the American Midwest in 1899. The MB missionaries from Russia worked alongside the Baptist missionaries who had preceded them and built up mission stations in the Telugu language area in Nalgonda, Jangaon and Bhongir. The MB missionaries from North America first established their own mission program on a narrow strip of land just to the west of the area already under the attention of their Russian co-missioners in coordination with their Baptist and Russian MB predecessors. Later, still in coordination with the Baptists and still under the definitions of comity (non-overlap) then in place, the North American MB mission area, and theirs through the end of the period covered in this book, came to include the roughly 140 x 140 mile area just to the south and extending into the southern suburbs of the city of Hyderabad (maps, p. 3).

The primary city in its drought prone and relatively backward region in south central India, Hyderabad was also the capitol in pre-Independence India of the feudal State of Hyderabad, also known as The Nizam's Dominions. The first "Nizam," a Muslim conqueror, seized power in the Hyderabad area in the seventeenth century under the hegemony of the Moguls then in power in Delhi. After the British Crown took over from the British East India Company to become India's preeminent colonial power following India's 1857 "First War of Independence" (or "Great Mutiny," depending on perspective), his successor Nizams

in the long line that followed eventually became the "faithful allies" of the British and in need of more and more support from the British in the maintenance of their power. The Nizam at the time of the arrival of the first MB missionaries in India was His Highness Mir Mahboob Ali Khan Bahadur.



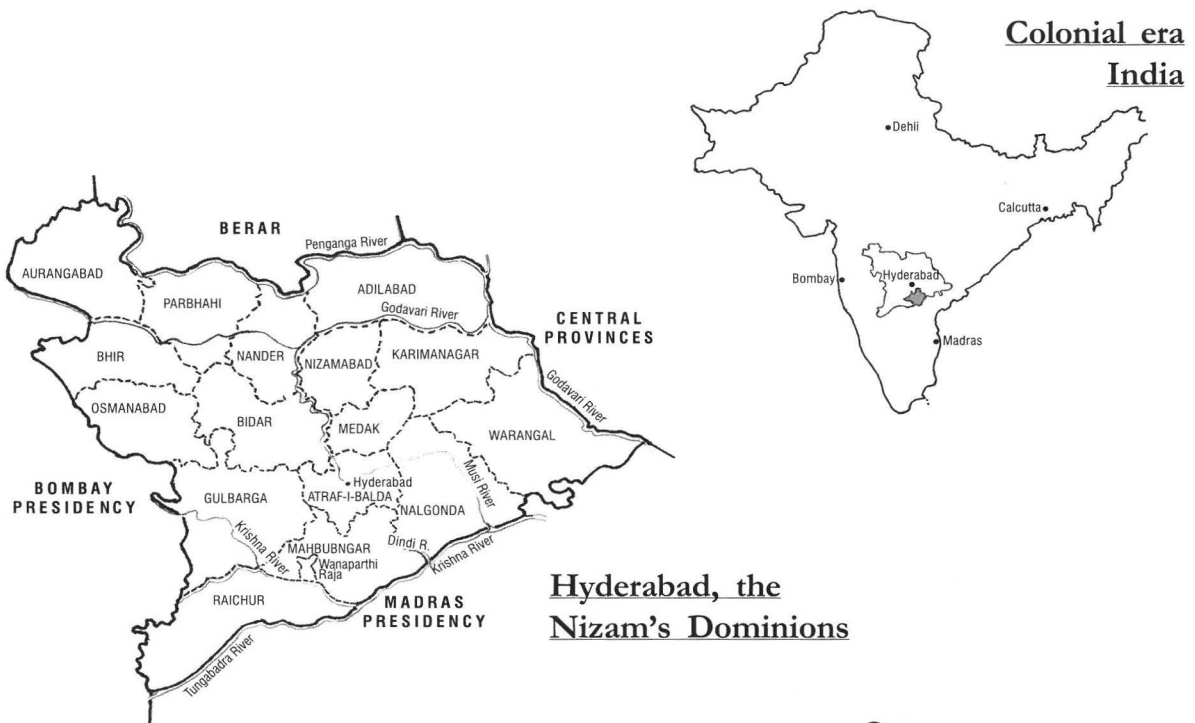
The vast majority of the people under the political and administrative

canopies put in place by the British and the Nizams were relatively little affected by them other than in the required payment of taxes and the general suppression of local initiative. More than 90 percent of the people in the Nizam's Dominions lived in agriculturally based villages (more than three quarters of them with fewer than 500 inhabitants) or tribal settlements. All but a handful were "Hindus" belonging to one or another of the many castes and other groupings, religious and secular, that made up the systems of social organization already long established in the area. While local distinctions in belief and practice were recognizable, and shaded into naturalist interpretations of reality, all such were also understandable and could be made meaningful, at least by higher level interpreters of the system, in reference to the great traditions of Indian civilization also locally very much alive and flourishing.

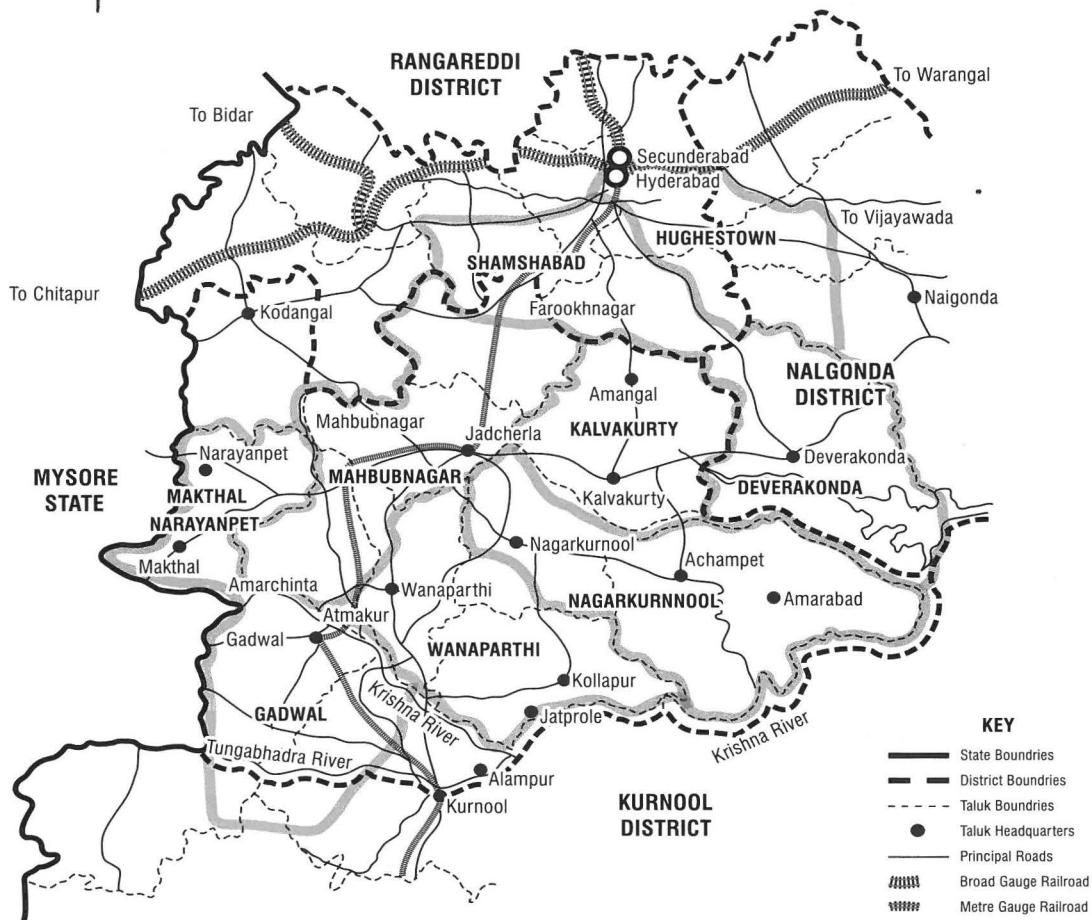
The total number of North American MB missionaries who served in India under the auspices of the MB mission board in North America between 1899, when the first of them arrived, and the early 1970s, when the mission era of the MB church in India ended (with the withdrawal of the last of the long-term missionaries), was seventy-three. Seldom were as many as twenty in India at one time. Like all but a handful of their predecessor missionaries in India over the centuries and their missionary contemporaries, the MBs in India set themselves up and organized their work out of mission compounds sprinkled across their mission territory.

The initiating work of the missionaries in the beginnings of the MB church in India was, of course, vitally important. As in the growth of all other churches in missionary contexts, however, none of it would have had any lasting significance had it not been listened to, understood, taken in, made meaningful, then retransmitted, for whatever the combinations of reasons, by at least some of those among whom the missionaries first gathered, then came to work as "brothers and sisters in the Lord." And so it was. The canopies of the British and the Nizams under which the MB missionaries had at first worked disappeared respectively at and just after Independence in 1947. The foreign missionary era of the MB church in India ended in the early 1970s. But the India MB church counted more than 200,000 baptized members in more than 800 congregations in 2008, at the same time recognizing that the church's growth in numbers and strength had come much more strikingly after its mission era closed than before.

Parts of the story of the India MB church through its mission phase are captured nicely in the reports of the missionaries to their Mission Board and the minutes kept of meetings over the years. Parts are captured in the writings of contributors like A. J. Dalavai (1968 and 2003), J. J. Dick (1958), Hal J. Dueck (2008), Mrs. H. T. Esau (1952), B. A. George (1979), A. E. Janzen (1950, 1963 and 1998), B. Z. John (1961), M. B. John (1972), J. H. Lohrenz (1939, 1948, 1949 and 1963), Phyllis Martens (1971), M. E. Prabhakar (1981), K. E. Raj Pramukh (1978), C. P. Reddy (1980), V. K. Rufus (1978), R. John Sankara Rao (2001), M. A.



**The MB
Mission Area
in the
Nizam's
Dominions**



The eventual MB Mission “field” to the south of the city of Hyderabad in the Nizam’ Dominions in colonial era India (above), included, as indicated, the following sub-fields: Hughestown, Shamsabad, Makthal/Narayanpet, Mahbubnagar, Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Nagarkurnool, Deverakonda and Kalvakurty.

India Mission up to 1945

"The mission endeavor in India was well established by 1945. It had been in operation for forty-six years and was at that time the major missionary outreach of the North American MB conference and its outreach of longest duration. Because of this it had become, in a way, the conference's missionary model of operation. The early missionaries emulated the Biblical pattern of "preaching, teaching and healing" (Matthew 4:23), but added the colonial "station pattern" to fit the culture of that era. This pattern and method of proclaiming the gospel called for touring the villages to preach, establishing schools on the mission station and in some major villages and operating hospitals at the stations to heal the sick. This same pattern was followed by our missionaries in Africa and China.



Rev. A. E. Janzen, about 1935. (CMBS Fresno)

"This basic pattern in missions fitted India perfectly. The missionary accompanied by Indian coworkers went to people where they lived. After there were a few local Christians, these could meet to encourage one another and to pray and worship together. The missionaries started schools. They worked mainly among the people of the lowest castes, people who were illiterate and needed to be taught to read and write and figure. The missionary school curriculum was built around Biblical instruction, Christian music and Christian social behavior. The mission schools were the sources of national preachers, teachers for the villages, personal workers and nurses and aides in the medical work as it developed. The missionaries built hospitals and clinics for a ministry to the sick, who had earlier had only local healing practices available to them.

For persons at the very bottom of the local order to be introduced to a message from Biblical instruction and to have medical care by Christian nurses and doctors, whose objective was to heal them both physically and spiritually, was "out of this world." And it was indeed. The Holy Spirit used each aspect of the three-fold ministry of the missionaries to reach people for whom Christ had died (adapted from Janzen, 1998: 252-253)."

These words were written by Rev. A. E. Janzen, Secretary of the North American MB Board of Missions from 1945 to 1975. Considerations in missions changed relatively little among the MBs of North America through the first fifty plus years of their missions programs in India. As for other denominations and organizations at work here and elsewhere, however, they changed dramatically thereafter, for the demise of colonialism and the emergence of proud and newly independent states rendered certain older patterns in missions no longer either meaningful or applicable (see Peters, 1952 and P. Wiebe, 2010).

Solomon (1980), John A. Wiebe (1949 and 1959), Vernon Wiebe (1980) and Viola Wiebe (1985 and, with Marilyn Dodge, 1990).

Much reflective substance is added to such accounts by scholars including R. S. Aseervadam (1980), S. Estborn (1961), Alvin T. Fishman (1941 and 1958), Peter Hamm (1967 and, with V. K. Rufus, 1970), Paul Hiebert (among others, 1967, 1971, 1982 and 2004), G. W. Peters (1952 and 1984), Don Ratzlaff (1997), J. A. Toews (1967) and J. B. Toews (1984 and 1991).

Historian Peter Penner (1993 and 1997) and sociologist Paul Wiebe (1988 and 2010) write in depth respectively about the lives and times of the MB missionaries in India and the emergence, organization, challenges and prospects of the India MB church.

Additionally revealing, particularly in the accounts therein by regional and conference leaders, are the “souvenir volumes” produced in commemoration of particular events in the life of the church, for instance, the centenary year observances of the first arrival of the MBs in India (1899) and the founding of the Nagarkurnool work (1904); the fifty year observances of the founding of the MB conference’s medical work in Jadcherla (1952), the organization of the youth association in Gadwal (1955) and the organization of the conference’s governing council (1958); the year (2006) in which 1000 villages had been visited by the youth association of the Zion MB Church in Devarakonda in their determination to “reach out” to as many nearby villages as possible with the teachings of the gospel; and the completion of the new Bethany MB Church building in Jadcherla (2008).

In turn, it is important to note that the most perceptive writings about the MB church in India for some time now have been coming from within the India MB church itself. These include the contributions of conference leaders and spokespersons such as P. B. Arnold and R. S. Lemuel. They include also the writings of the pastors and other leaders of the conference’s hundreds of congregations, as encouraged by the India church’s historical association, and the writings of the conference’s leading scholars, including E. D. Solomon (whose study of the church in the village he calls Madiri Puram in the MB church area, completed in 2008, is a landmark study) and I. P. Asheervadam (whose studies of Dalit theology in India are of much importance both for the larger church in India and around the world and for the MB church in India).

In Another Day of the Lord is primarily a book of pictures of the mission phase (1899 through the early 1970s) in the emergence of the India MB church. We have put it together for our own enjoyment (we were both born and grew up in India and have returned most happily many times in various responsibilities) and in recognizing how well pictures — relatively “formal” though they commonly were in those earlier days — can complement nicely the understandings possible through writings such as those cited above. We plan to put a companion volume of pictures together shortly in celebration of the India MB church as it is, that is as it enters its second century.

Kevin Enns-Rempel and his student assistants at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, California, assisted us kindly and resourcefully in locating and reproducing many of the pictures included here. Peggy Goertzen of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Hillsboro, Kansas, encouraged us along the way. I. P. Asheervadam, Executive Secretary, India MB Historical Association, helped us most kindly in our collection of pictures and other materials from our India conference archives housed at MBCBC, Shamshabad. We are delighted Werner Kroeker, friend, colleague, counselor and fellow traveler to and with India agreed to write our Foreword.

Finally, the patience, encouragement, good humor, council and, most importantly, love of our wives of just at fifty years now, Donna Beth (Kliewer) and Lorma Lee (Kroeker) respectively, continue to keep us centered, at the same time free to enquire about all that's honest and true and of good report. Not easy this, given how the two of us in our background and identities are "firmly planted" between both east and west. But for them as easy as for any, given whom they are and always will be in the grace of the Lord.

Paul D. Wiebe
David A. Wiebe
December 2010

Foreword: An Ongoing Story

Werner Kroeker

Missionaries

Memories of the missionaries pictured in this book go back to early childhood. My father was a pastor. Our family was always present when missionaries came to our church. At evening meetings the missionaries always showed slides, showing pictures of groups of “natives,” identifying someone in the second row third from the end, then telling a story about that person.

I remember the missionaries and their families would sing songs in one or another strange language. I remember little if anything that was said. What always impressed me were the displays on the table at the exit. In particular, I remember an astoundingly large snakeskin, probably the skin of a king cobra.

Pausing in writing just now, I asked my wife Elsie Ann what she remembered about missionaries who visited her church when she was young. With recollection similar to mine she responded without hesitation “snake skins and pith helmets.”

In the 1990s, more than twenty five years after the last of the long term missionaries from North America had left and late in our lives, Elsie Ann and I went to India for the

first time. We were astonished by many things, and certainly by the hospitality of the people. We were also astonished at the undue deference paid us just because we happened to come from the same country as the missionaries. Older and many of the middle-aged people who remembered the missionaries told us stories about them. The long-term missionaries were gone, but people spoke with pride and gratitude about having known them, and sometimes with

The Paxton MB Church, Nebraska, on a Sunday morning in 1928. (EA)



deep emotion about how their lives had been transformed by the message the missionaries had introduced.

Once riding in a taxi, the sophisticated, educated and, I thought, somewhat cynical man next to me told how the first missionary family to come to the village to which we were now driving had traveled by ox-cart with the missionary walking in front with a crowbar to remove rocks in the way. He went on to tell about the sacrifices of the missionaries and the profound changes that had come to India and his family because of them. When he stopped talking I turned toward him ... to find him wiping tears from his eyes.

Backgrounds

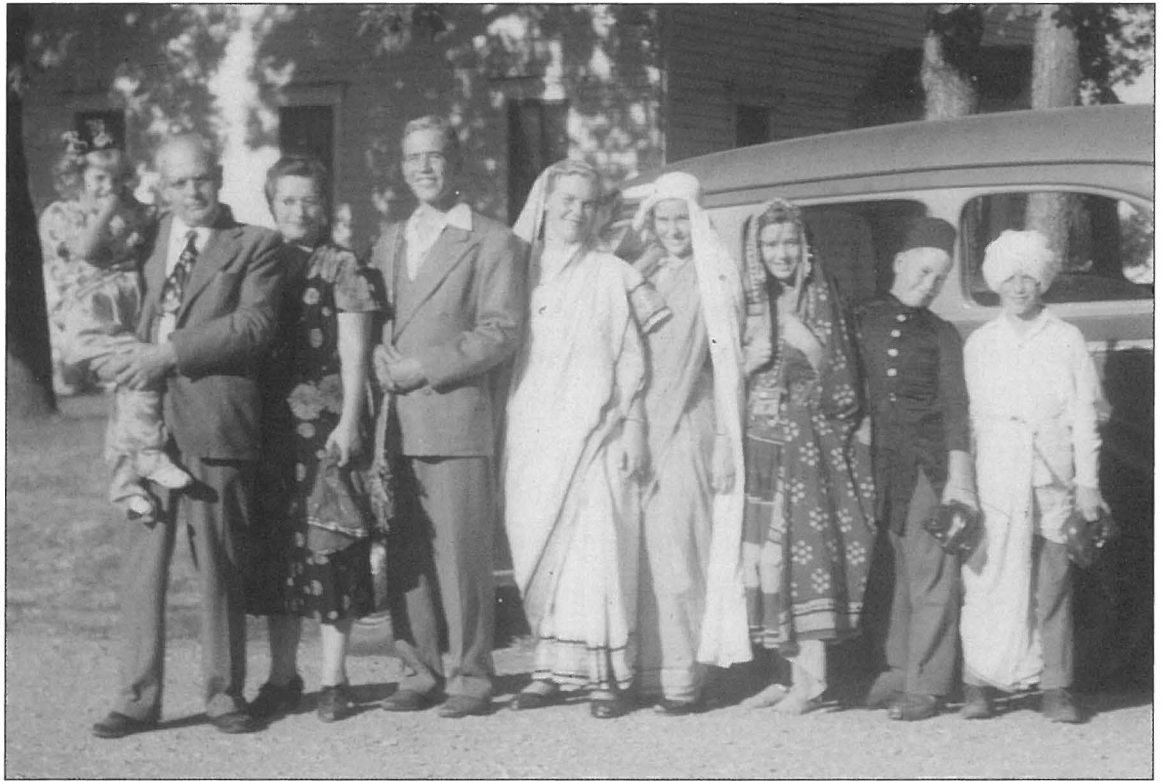
The missionaries pictured in this book came to India between 1899 and the middle 1970s. They came to a culture vastly different from their own. They came from farm and small town backgrounds in a democratic North America to a colonial world where most of the villagers were very poor and lived within a system of castes that stretched back into antiquity and limited their activities.

The missionaries came as evangelists and preachers, teachers and doctors. Their educational backgrounds varied. Some came broadly trained, others with special skills. One day when cleaning out a closet in the bungalow where we lived in Shamshabad I found an early missionary's lesson plans for use in teaching the village pastors in one of his courses to read the Greek New Testament. Some of the missionaries mastered the language of the people. Others greatly amused their hearers when they spoke it.

The North American MB missionaries and their children in India in 1938: (adults seated on ground, l-r) Viola Wiebe, John Wiebe; (adults seated, l-r) J. N. C. Hiebert, Mary Wall, Katharina Schellenberg, Anna Bergthold, Helen Warkentine, John Lobrenz; (adults standing, l-r) Anna Hiebert, Catherine Reimer, Anna Hanneman, Elizabeth Balzer, Peter Balzer, Daniel Bergthold, Anna Dick, J. J. Dick. (CMBS Fresno)



The missionary Wiebe family ready for a deputation tour of MB churches in North America, the children of the family dressed in Indian garb: (l-r) Marilyn, parents John and Viola, John, Esther, Ruth, Irene, David and Paul. (EA)



The missionaries arrived as pioneers. Early on they were accepted as spiritual parents. Later, they worked as partners alongside the many who joined them in the work of the church. Increasingly, as the church now well established in the mission area grew further and further into maturity, they and their Indian “brothers and sisters in the Lord” became more and more fully participants together in what had now become possible. Some of the missionaries stayed a lifetime. Others came for a few years, then returned to North America. Some adapted readily. Others attempted to reproduce what was more familiar to them.

Pictures cannot tell the whole story of the times of the missionaries. But they help us better understand how a land once very far away and different from ours has become so much more familiar, how such a land’s peoples and we, who not so long ago were isolated from each other, increasingly come to share experiences. Far beyond what was ever intended or imagined, the work of the missionaries was a major factor in bringing about the changes we and people in India now take for granted.

Activities

The missionaries engaged in a variety of activities. They were first of all evangelists whose message had life-transforming consequences. Early on they also saw the need for caring for the sick and hungry, for education and job training, and built buildings and institutions.

Through the first half of the twentieth century the missionaries challenged the colonial powers. The approach of the colonial powers was to control the people to their advantage. The approach of the missionaries was to serve. One sees today the remains of the

comparatively grand bungalows in which the missionaries once lived. Yet one cannot but remember at least as clearly the record of their costly sacrifices and their willingness to work with the poorest of the poor.

The work of the missionaries also challenged the underpinnings of the Indian caste system. Though there were impressive exceptions, the overwhelming majority of the recruits to the church now being organized were the poor and oppressed, the Dalits as they are known today, the Harijans as Gandhi called them, those who had nothing to lose and much to gain, the “untouchables.” And to this day it is among the poor and the oppressed, just as it is also among those less so, that one can continue to see the profound changes that can result when a message like the message of the gospel is promulgated.

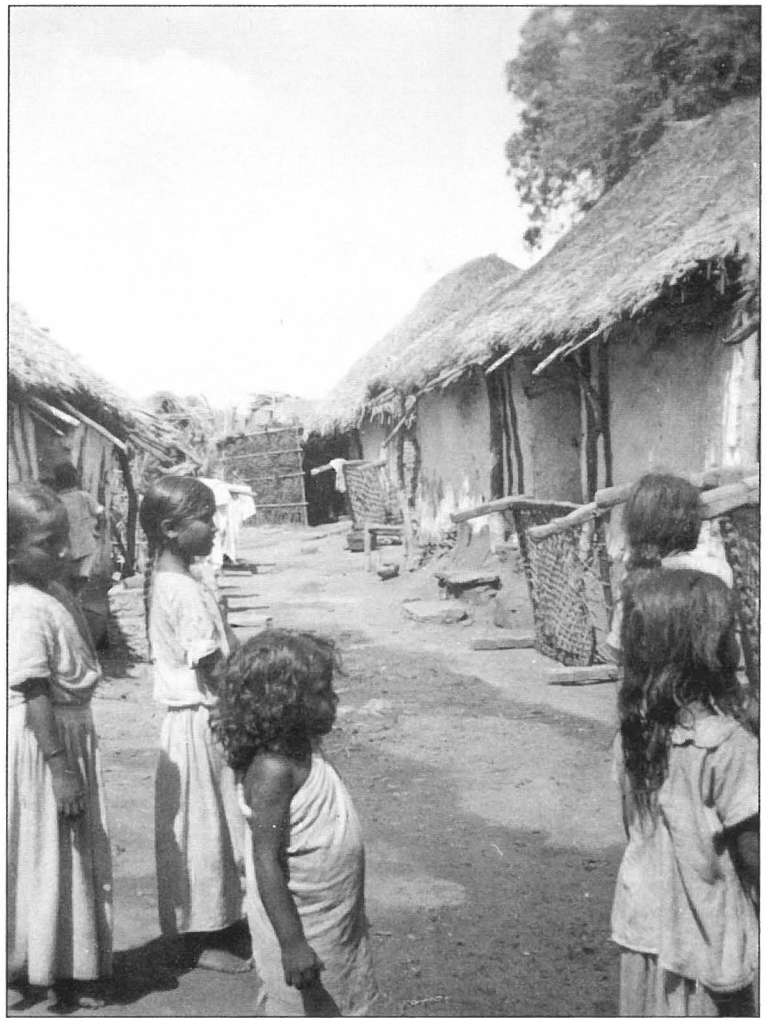
An abbreviated story illustrates this. Elsie Ann and I were told about a man who two generations back, when away from his hovel and in the upper caste section of the village in which he and his family lived, was required to drag a palm branch tied around his neck behind him in order to wipe out his footprints lest an upper-caste person should step into them, required to carry a small clay pot into which to spit so he wouldn’t pollute the ground by spitting on it.

One day one of the missionaries pictured in this book came to his village with the good news of the gospel. Hearing the missionary’s message, the man’s son believed what he had heard and responded accordingly. And in time, after receiving training under the sponsorship of the missionaries, he returned to his village to live out his life as a pastor. Not that life now became easy for him. It didn’t. And when he died he was buried in a lone grave under a tree in a corner of the small plot of land he had acquired for himself and his family, this because the elders of his village would not allow him to be buried in the usual burial plot.

The work of the missionaries, however, had brought about vast changes. Elsie Ann and I were taken to the pastor’s burial by his son, now too a Christian, a young man with a PhD from a prestigious university and teaching in a Bible college.

For What Purpose

What was it that made the missionaries willing to leave their homes for years on end to go to a place so vastly different than their own? How could they bring themselves to send



A village street scene in the Gadwal area, about 1950. (CMBS Fresno)

their children, even their young children, far away to boarding school for months at a time? Without communications systems of the kind we now take for granted, what must it have been like for them in the early years to learn weeks, sometimes months, after that a parent or brother or sister had died at home? Why did they come?

For us it was a sobering and profound experience here and there in remote Indian villages to find the graves of those who, had they remained in their home countries, might easily have survived. Add to this the tragedy that in far too many instances their little children are buried beside them. When Elsie Ann and I once asked the caretaker of a large cemetery in the city of Hyderabad about the location of a particular grave, he said, "That would be in the missionary section."

Among the graves of the missionaries in India are the monuments to those who might have returned to their home countries but chose not to. The missionary doctor who in thirty-seven years returned to her native place only three times, then chose not to go again. She lies buried there. So do others, including some who are pictured in this book, whose mission work was considered to have ended, but who chose to find other work in India rather than to live again in North America. Others returned to India, sometimes repeatedly, some to the ends of their lives, to encourage and work alongside those now responsible for what they had earlier been responsible together.

*Part of the congregation
at a Sunday morning
service in the
Mabbubnagar mission
compound Calvary MB
Church, 1957. (CMBS
Fresno)*





Why did they come? They were sent by their home churches; they sensed an inner “calling” in their discipleship; they believed that the treasure they had received, the gospel of Jesus Christ, needed to be carried (in “jars of clay,” to be sure, but nonetheless) to those whose lives, as theirs had been, would by it be transformed, lifted out of spiritual and material poverty, and given the gift of divine salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

That is why they came, and the church in India is evidence that God worked through them.

What Did They Accomplish

The missionaries’ message, the Holy Spirit working with them, challenged a time-honored and deeply ingrained cultural and social system. More importantly it challenged the inner lives of those who heard. Imagine what it must have been like for those whose only hope was that in some future reincarnation their lot might be better, but who at the same time felt that they had little control over what that future life might be. Imagine hearing that in his death and resurrection Christ had conquered and abolished the curse of death. The message of the missionaries not only gave their hearers hope for a better life in the present but also an eternal hope.

Mourners observing the death of missionary Dr. Katharina Schellenberg in Shamshabad, January 1945. (CMBS Fresno)

Those who heard and believed the missionaries' message shared it with family, friends and neighbors, and the Lord, working with them, multiplied the seed sown into a rich harvest.

If the accomplishment of the missionaries is impressive, even more impressive is the fact that after the missionaries left, the church, rather than declining, experienced accelerated growth. And today the number of those to whom the missionaries came has doubled and doubled again from what the missionaries saw during their time in India.

An Ongoing Story

Helpful as is this book in understanding the mission era in the story of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India, another book is needed in order for us to understand what has happened since, in the faithfulness of those who have carried on with the work the missionaries began.

But even such an addition will not tell the most important part of the story. The story of our missionaries is impressive. So is the story of our Indian brothers and sisters. But the most impressive story of all is neither "ours" nor "theirs" but the story of the redeeming and transforming power of God's great salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ, the story of a treasure that transforms our lives and the lives of those with whom we share it, so that "they" and "we" are no longer strangers one to another but together the children of God. Thankfully this book, too, is being written and some day all of us together will marvel at its content.

Teachers and students coming to understand new possibilities in a classroom, their noon meal under preparation in the back corner. (CMBS Fresno)



By the Grace of God



Rev. Dr. P. B. and Mrs. Sharada Arnold and family, 1981. (FA)

“Missionaries chosen by God and sent by the MB churches of North America and Indian Christians who worked alongside them established the MB Church of India. The people who responded by receiving the gospel became its foundation.

“The majority of the people who became Christians in this part of India were from outside the caste system. They were named and treated as untouchables. God in His own will chose these people to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Indian Christians working as preachers, teachers, health workers, gardeners, cooks, maidservants and so on played a key role in bringing the people and the missionaries together. They were the grass roots workers who actually accomplished the work of the mission. They were the ones who led others into the saving faith of Jesus Christ, motivated parents to send their children to mission schools, encouraged the sick to come to the mission hospitals and selected young people for theological education and the jobs of the mission.

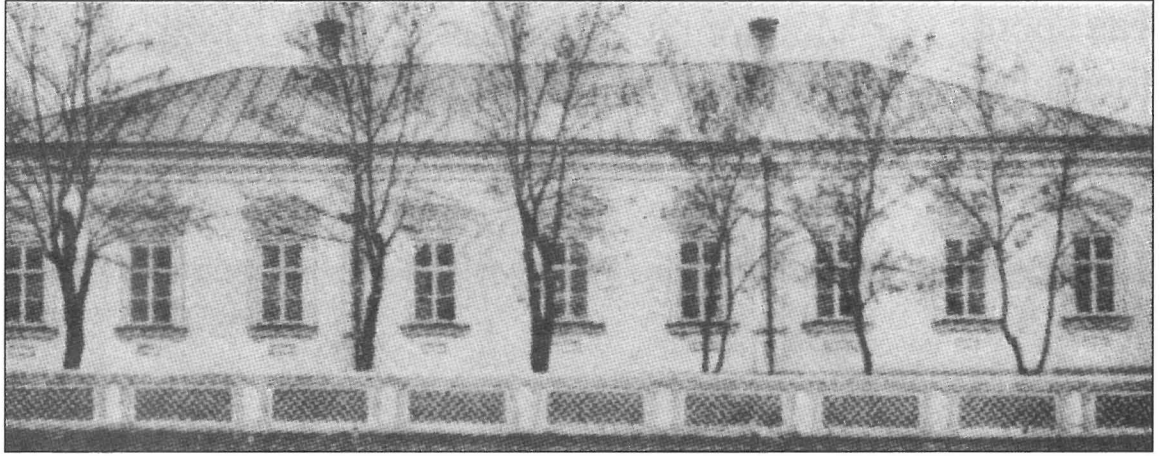
“Today, one hundred plus years later, the descendants of these same people are pastors, evangelists, theologians, educationists, doctors, nurses, paramedics, engineers, businessmen, farmers, workers and leaders in our society. A people who were no people became the people of God. People who were oppressed and received no mercy for thousands of years received the mercy of God. Such is the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“We gratefully acknowledge and remember the sacrificial services of the missionaries of the American MB mission along with the innumerable numbers of our own preachers, teachers, health workers, evangelists, leaders and social workers. Without their service, witness and prayers, we would not be what we now are, by the grace of God.”

With the exception of the year 1979-80, Rev. Dr. P. B. Arnold has been President (early on Chairman) of the Governing Council of the Conference of the MB Church of India. His words above are adapted from messages of his in 1999 and 2008 (see Bibliography).

The Sending Church

The birthplace church of the MBs, Rueckenau, Ukraine (the building pictured was constructed in 1883), (CMBS Fresno)



The Carson Township MB Church, Minnesota — first constructed in 1885, expanded in 1892 — without a doubt the leading church in the early mission work of the North American MBs. (FA)

The MB Church was founded in a break from its parent Mennonite community in Ukraine in Russia in 1860. Many MBs remained in Russia through the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, many eventually to experience the upheavals that lead into, then festered and grew into, terrible proportions during and following World Wars I and II. Others, beginning in the 1870s, left for North America to settle and begin life anew.





The Martin and Wilhelmina Just farm near Fairview, Oklahoma, at the marriage of their son Henry to Anna Karber (the little girl is Mattie Wichert). (FA)



Threshing wheat with steam engine and horses near Henderson, Nebraska, 1920s. (FA)



The David Martens' farm near Fairview, Oklahoma, 1942. (FA)



The Henry Kroeker farmstead, Paxton, Nebraska, 1927. (EA)

Factors of different kinds help explain the break of the MBs from their parent community. Among these, however, was the desire of the MBs from the beginning to reemphasize spiritual matters and evangelism, which they thought had fallen into neglect.

The first MB settlers in North America settled in the Midwest and experienced all the hardships of frontier living here in the late 1800s: isolation, loneliness, the periodic plagues of grasshoppers, periods of drought, dust storms, limited if any access to services, the hardships of living in houses built of prairie sod and so on. Yet like so many others in similar circumstances they persisted. And before long they had organized churches for themselves in their settlements.

Delegates from MB churches in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota and the Dakotas convened in Henderson, Nebraska, in October 1879 to promote spiritual fellowship, define and establish a united front of doctrine and practice in their community life together and organize more effectively their mission work. By the 1950s, the North American MBs had established congregations in a dozen or more states of the United States to the west of the Mississippi and across Canada, from Ontario to British Columbia. By the 1950s also, many of the MBs in North America had moved from farming, which had earlier engaged almost all of them, into other occupations.



Newly formed choir in front of the Paxton, Nebraska MB church, 1928. Note separate entrances for men and women. (EA)

Wheat was our Main Crop

Good and bad times mixed in early America as everywhere and always. Conditions varied. So did personalities and resources and understandings. Herbert A. and Inez Martens Klierer (1917-2007 and 1918-2008 respectively) were born and brought up in Oklahoma in the first decades of the twentieth century, and here married and lived all of their lives. The glimpses they offer in the paragraphs below (adapted from D. Wiebe, 1987), Inez of the 1930s as they were experienced near Balko in far western Oklahoma, Herb of some of the conditions of farm life around Fairview in the later 1930s, afford us insights anew into what life in those times was like.



Inez: *"Those were really tough times. No feed for the cattle, and the grass didn't grow. They killed cattle in those days. The government paid something for destroying them. We could always keep a few chickens. The fields blew so bad and they tried to do something to keep what little vegetation came up on them. At night often folks would hang quilts over the windows to keep the dust from coming in. Sometimes too we kids would go to bed and Mom and Pop would just sit up and watch us. You sometimes felt like you'd just smother. We'd use wet cloths over our faces and mouths. A lot of people had dust pneumonia."*

Herb: *"We'd either bind or harvest with a header, a machine that cut wheat heads. We'd cut wheat and had an elevator that would put it on a wagon called a header barge, then we'd stack it by hand. We'd cut a whole stack, like loose hay then thresh it with a threshing machine using a steam engine for power. Sometimes we'd bind it and shock it. In the 1930s I remember when wheat was twenty-five cents a bushel. Dad would haul a load of wheat to Okeene, twelve miles, and trade it for flour and sugar. Wheat was our main crop, plus some kaffir for feed."*

Herb: *"Folks always took us children to church. No question. The 'Fibel,' not Bible, was used in Sunday school, to learn the German language. Church was where our friends were."*

"On Sunday we didn't play ball, but we could go ice skating, horse riding and sledding. We cousins that lived on our section would get together every Sunday. Mom always cooked big on Sundays and we always had company for dinner (lunch). We had devotions every night. When we were ready to go to bed we always had to wait 'til we'd had devotions. Dad would read some scripture and we'd all pray. Sometimes we'd fall asleep and folks would have to wake us."

The first missionary work of the MBs in India was organized by the MBs who had remained in Russia in coordination with the Baptists already in India. Eager to start, still unprepared to organize their own mission program at such a distance, already linked in ways with the Baptists in southern Russia and Europe, fully informed about the work of the Baptists already underway among the Telugus and receptive to the call of the Baptists already in India for additional coworkers, this coordination came naturally enough.

When the American MBs arrived a decade later (in 1899), however, they carved out a new mission territory (albeit in coordination with their Baptist and Russian MB predecessors) of their own.

The Russian MBs worked in coordination with their Baptist co-missioners out of their mission centers in Nalgonda, Jangaon and Bhongir through the early years of the twentieth century. When revolutionary turmoil and anarchy subsequently enveloped their Russian homeland during and following World War I, cutting them off completely from their supporting churches, the Baptists took them fully into their mission embrace. Almost all of the early North American MB missionaries to India were from the American Midwest. Following World War I most came from Canada.

Saying goodbye to missionaries Henry and Marie Enns, leaving for the Cameroons, from the Mountain Lake, Minnesota, train station, in the cold of winter, at the very end of 1896. Both died in the Cameroons within fifteen months of their departure. (Courtesy of Elaine Kroeker).



Saying goodbye to missionaries leaving for India in Herbert, Saskatchewan, 1920. (CMBS Fresno)



*J. N. C. and Anna Hiebert and children in front their carryall in Minnesota shortly before departure for another term in India, 1938.
(Courtesy of Elaine Kroeker).*

Even So Send I You

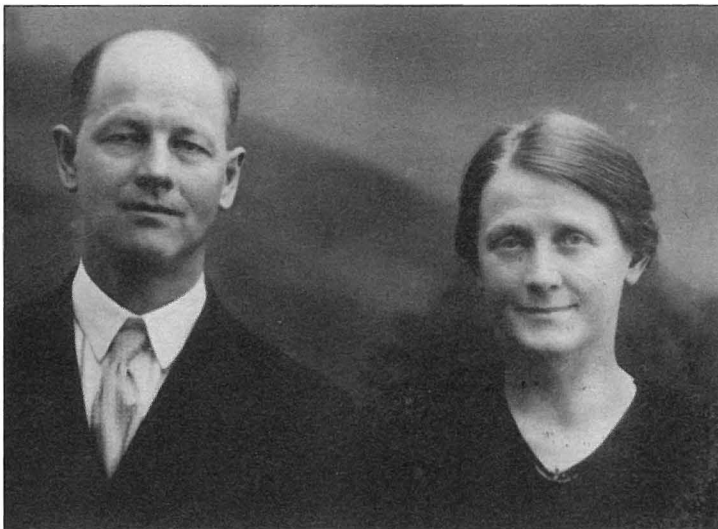
The Board of Foreign Missions of the MB Conference in North America in 1947 identified the basis of the Conference's guiding principles and policies in missions as follows: "The missionary responsibility is stated in Jesus' great commission to his disciples (Matthew 28: 18-20, Mark 16: 15-16, Luke 24: 46-49, John 20:21); exemplified in the Book of Acts, which gives the record of the first witnesses going forth in the power of the Holy Spirit; expounded in the New Testament Epistles, as the early apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to lay down the principles of all mission activities. The Conference's responsibility in mission shall 'ever be' to preach the gospel; baptize those who accept the gospel message; organize and establish such believers in local churches for nurture, mutual edification, fellowship, instruction and service; unite the local churches of a field into an organized conference and national convention which is the church that continues the proclamation of the gospel, directs and regulates its own church affairs and meets its own financial requirements."

MB educator H.W. Lohrenz in collaboration with his India missionary brother J.H. Lohrenz explains the beginnings of the North American MB mission program in India on the basis of such policies and principles as follows (1939: 3):

"As early as 1883 there was considerable interest among the Mennonite Brethren Churches of America in foreign mission work. For several years our people contributed privately and through the conference to various missionaries in India and in Africa. This interest grew to such a point that the Conference, meeting in Winkler, Manitoba, in 1898, adopted the resolution to send Brother and Sister N.N. Hiebert to India. The later visits of Missionary Abraham Friesen of Russia, who worked in

India under the auspices of the American Baptist Missionary Union, stimulated our people still further in the endeavor to organize their missionary activities in India on a lasting basis.

"In the summer of 1899 Brother and Sister N.N. Hiebert, accompanied by Sister Elizabeth Neufeld sailed for India where they landed in the fall of the year to find a friendly welcome at the mission station Nalgonda. Here this group was joined by Sister Anna Suderman from North India. She had gone into the mission field a little earlier. Somewhat later Brother Hiebert rented a place in

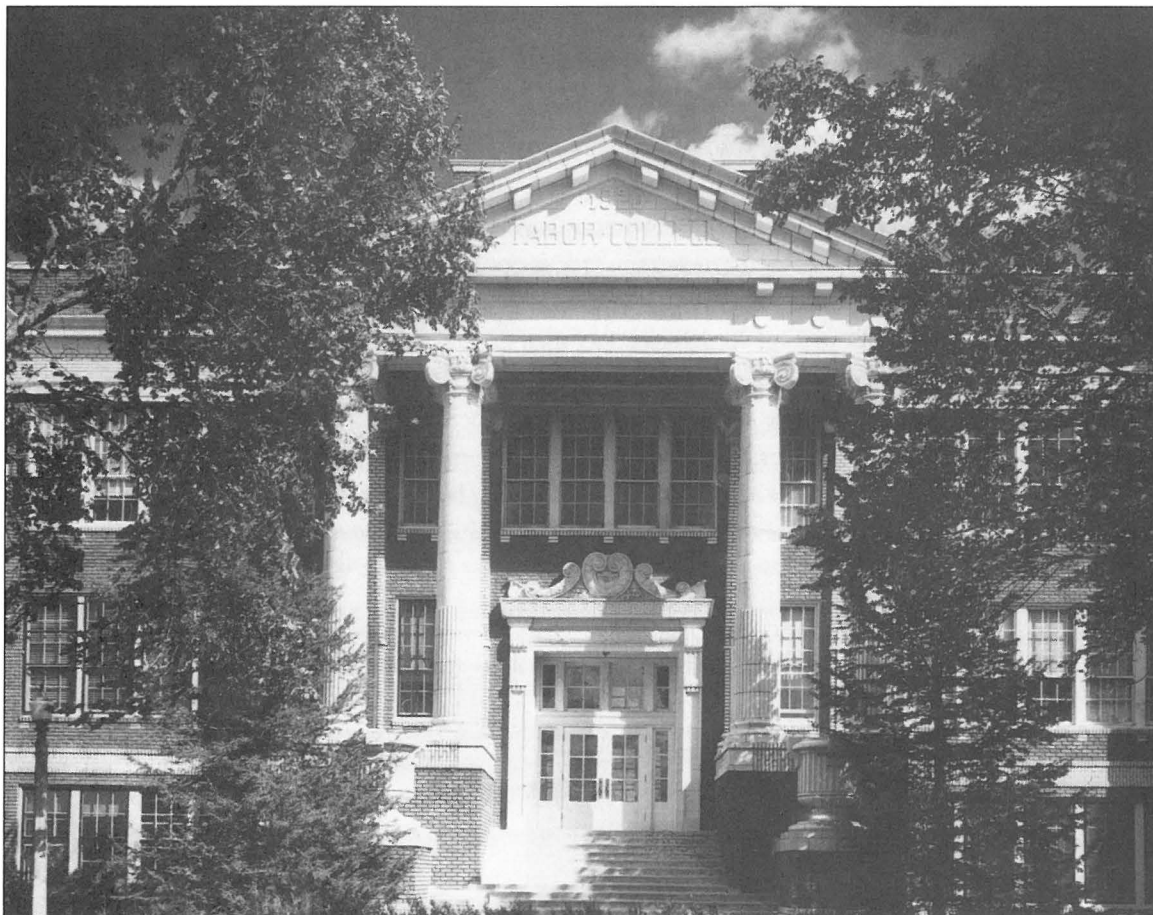


John H. and Maria (Klaassen) Lohrenz. (CMBS Fresno)

Hughestown. The big question confronting our missionaries was that of finding a suitable place for their work. In this they were advised by Reverend E. Chute of the Baptist mission. He recommended a field east of his own (in Mabbubnagar and Gadwal), into which we soon moved."



The congregation in the Mountain Lake MB Church. (Courtesy Elaine Kroeker)



The administration building of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, established in 1908. (EA)

Travel and Arrival

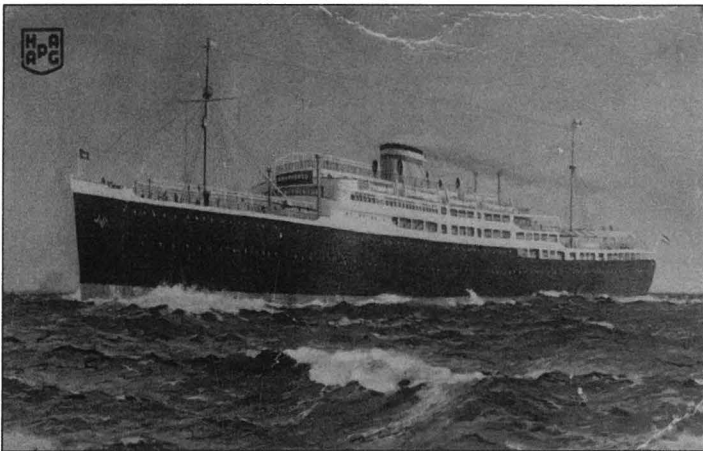
The departures of the missionaries from their rural and small town churches in North America for India were very special occasions. The missionaries were emissaries of their churches. They were off for an “unknown” land. While those who sent them promised to pray faithfully for their safety and safe return, they knew accidents, evil forces or strange diseases might claim the health, even the lives, of their missionaries in the faraway land to which they now proceeded.

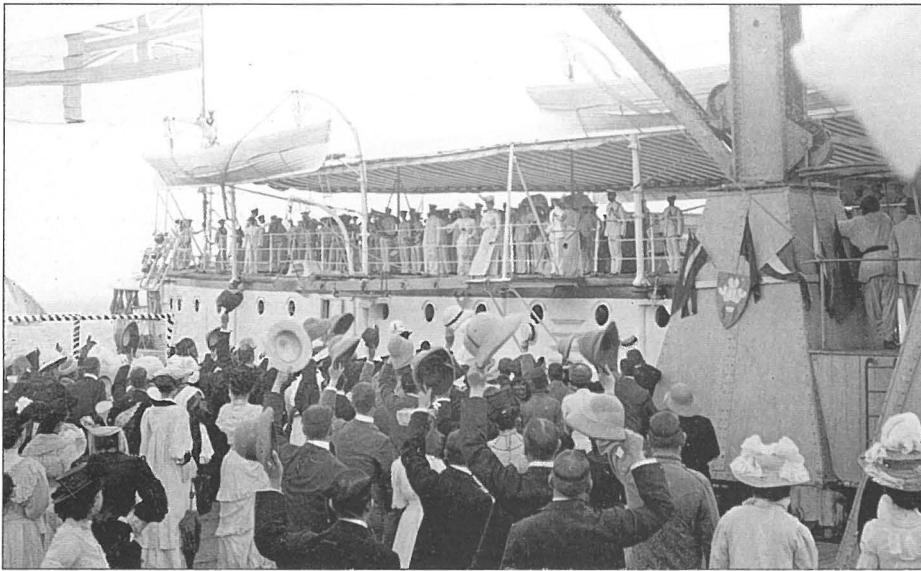
(Below) HAPAG liners like the one pictured below were among the liners in service between North America and Europe through the first half of the twentieth century. (EA)

Mission terms in the early days were for seven or more years. Much would change while the missionaries were away. Communication would be difficult, even impossible, for months at a time.

MB missionary travel to India through the middle 1950s was always by ship. And from North America, with a stopover in Europe, perhaps also Ukraine, it generally took at least a month. Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Colombo (in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka), were sometimes ports of arrival. So was Madras (now Chennai), particularly for the Russian MBs, as the Baptists with whom they were affiliated had their mission headquarters up from Madras along the Coromandel Coast. Most commonly, Bombay (now Mumbai) was the favored port of arrival, with travel thereafter, after the clearance of luggage through customs and its transfer by handcart, oxcart or rickshaw to the railway station, by train to Hyderabad.

(Below right) The Lloyd Nedloyd freighter S. S. Billiton transported members of the Friesen, Kasper and Wiebe families from New Orleans to Bombay (a two-months voyage) in late 1950. (EA)

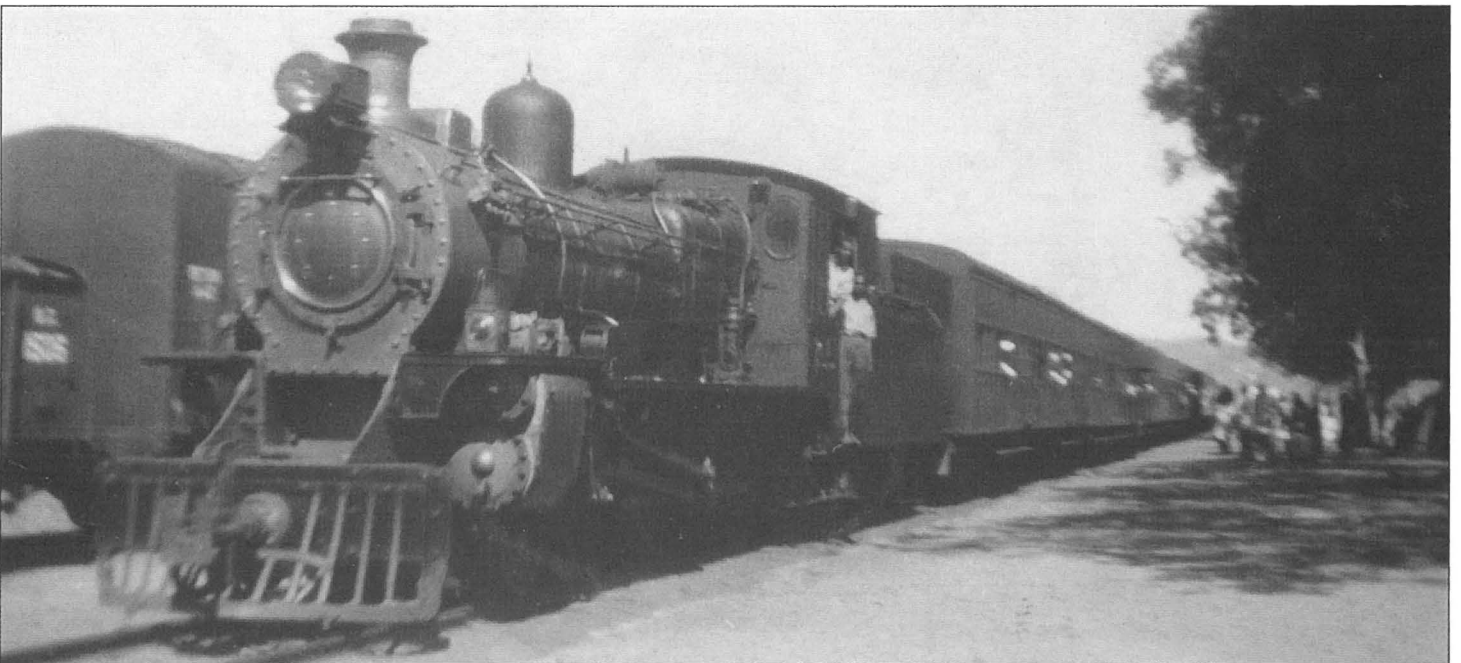




*Dockside upon arrival in
Mumbai. (FA)*



*Collecting water at a
train station platform tap
en route from Bombay to
Hyderabad. (CMBS Fresno)*



*Picking up passengers in
Mabbubnagar, 1941.
(FA)*

The first North American MB missionaries to India were welcomed in Hyderabad then introduced to their new setting and work in Nalgonda by their Russian co-missioners. Within a few years the North Americans, now settling into their own mission stations, were working on their own.

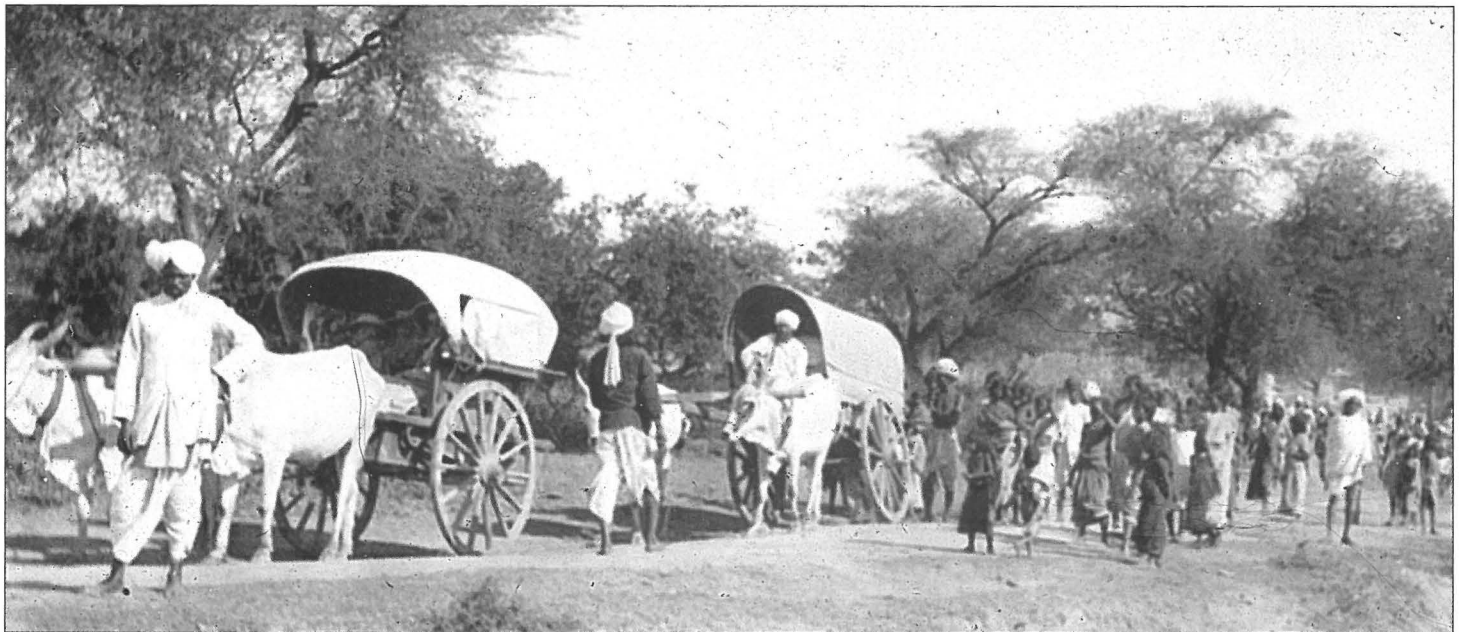
Motor vehicle traffic became increasingly common in the Hyderabad area after the 1940s. Ship travel to India had almost entirely been replaced by air travel by the 1960s. Today cell phones, internet facilities and jet planes make it somewhat difficult even to remember the separations the missionaries experienced, especially in the early days.

But these were very real, as the following brief illustration helps make clear. Daniel and Anna Berghold left their two oldest daughters, Viola and Lydia, in North America when

The Unruh and Wiebe families getting about Hyderabad, about 1936. (FA)



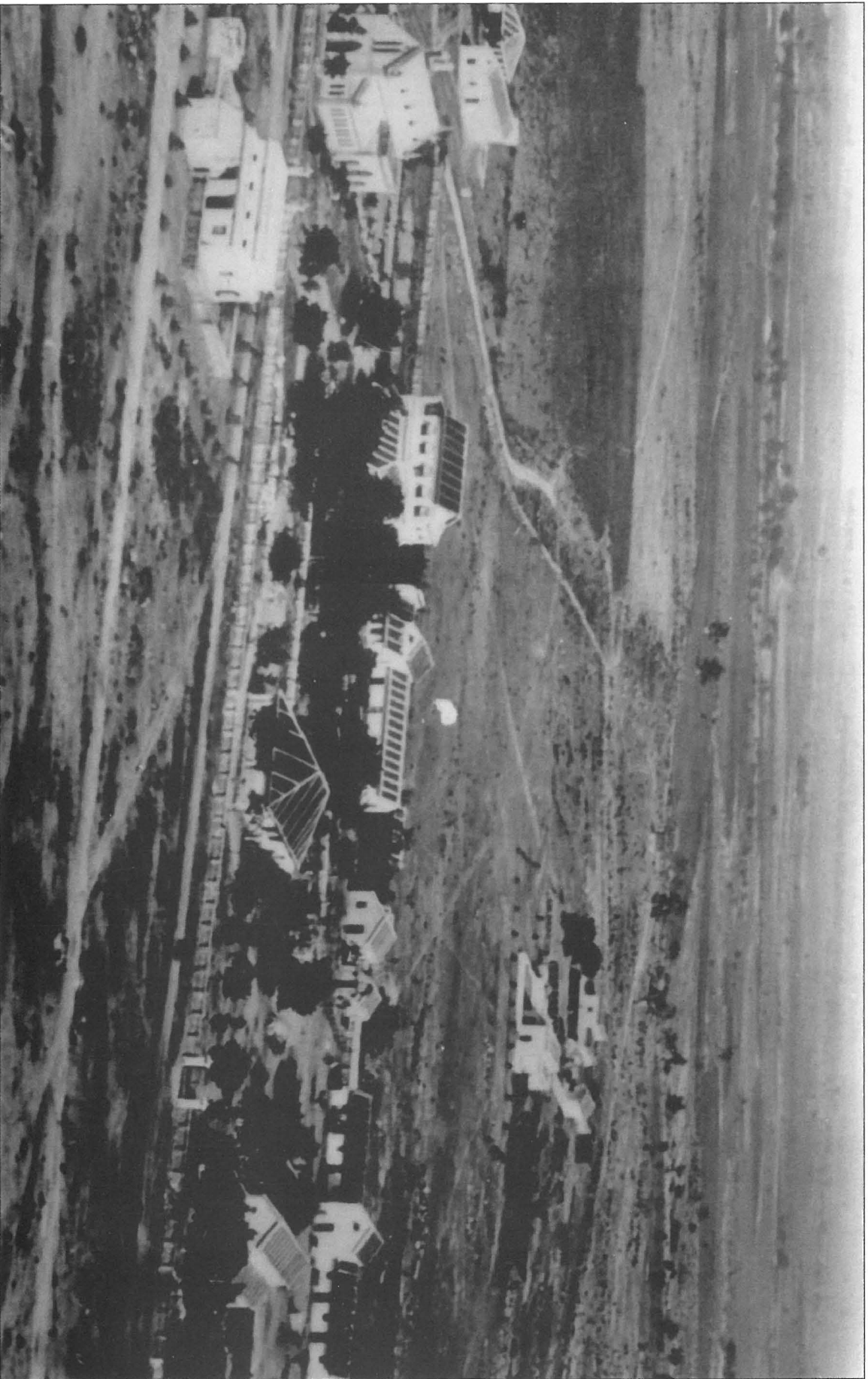
Along the road from the train station in Hyderabad to Shadnagar, 1920. (FA)



they returned to India in the early 1920s. Experiencing difficulties in her work in 1925, Lydia, then nineteen, wrote her parents the middle of May. They wrote back 9 July, the day they received her letter, encouraging her to “trust in God” and to recognize in prayer that “all things work together for good for those who trust God.” They reminded her that “God willing (they would) probably be back in America in 1928.” Lydia received their letter 10 September, roughly four months after she had sent hers.



Russian and American MBs together in Nalgonda, 1988: (Seated on floor, l-r) N. N. and Susie W. Hiebert, Anna Suderman (later Bergthold); (seated on chairs) Etta F. Edgerton (ABMU), A. J. and Katrina P. Huebert (with children), Lorena Breed (ABMU); (standing) Anna P. and Heinrich H. Unrub, Elizabeth S. Neufeld (later Wichert, Wall), Maria M. and A. J. Friesen. (CMBS Fresno)

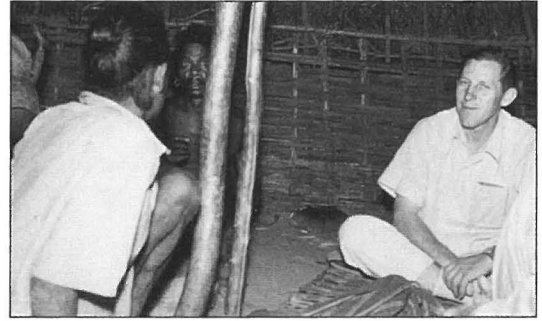


The mission compound at Nagonda, about 1920. (CMBS Fresno)

The Driver Just Leaned on His Horn



Herman Warkentin, his son John and two friends, 1950. (Courtesy John Warkentin family)



Herman Warkentin talking with his Chenchu hosts, about 1949. (Courtesy John Warkentin family)

"We arrived in Hyderabad this morning (23 January 1947). We got our suitcases through customs and then took a taxi to Shamsabad. This ride I shall not even try to describe. I am sure only a moving picture of us tearing down the road could give you a clear picture. The roads are so bad and rough and are full of people, cows, chickens and what not, but the driver just leaned on his horn and everything scattered. If we had not been so hot and dirty, I think we would have seen the humorous side of the ride. Cows are everywhere. They roam the streets. Monkeys are also plentiful. We see them jumping from tree to tree. We stopped and watched a snake charmer with his cobra for awhile. We have also seen elephants carrying huge bundles of hay. All along the river front the washermen are busy washing clothes. Pigs and buffaloes were also having a bath at the same time not far off. We feel we have seen many of the things in reality that we only saw in pictures at home. Only now we get the smell of it too.

"Rev. and Mrs. J.H. Lobrenz, Helen Harder and Emma Lepp gave us a real welcome in Shamsabad. They had hot water ready and we bathed and ate dinner and felt like new persons.

"(A few days later) Rev. P.V. Balzer from Deverakonda came for us. They had a welcome for us in church. One of the preacher's wives sang a solo and the girls of the boarding school sang a song. They have no piano in the church, but these people love to sing. We gave our testimonies. We couldn't understand what they said and they couldn't understand us, but we felt we were part of India already. During the program one of the little girls came up and slipped a garland of flowers about our necks. This is a beautiful custom and the Indians do it when they want to show honor. At the end Herman quoted one verse of Telugu that he had learned from a missionary on board ship. After he was through the people clapped and clapped."

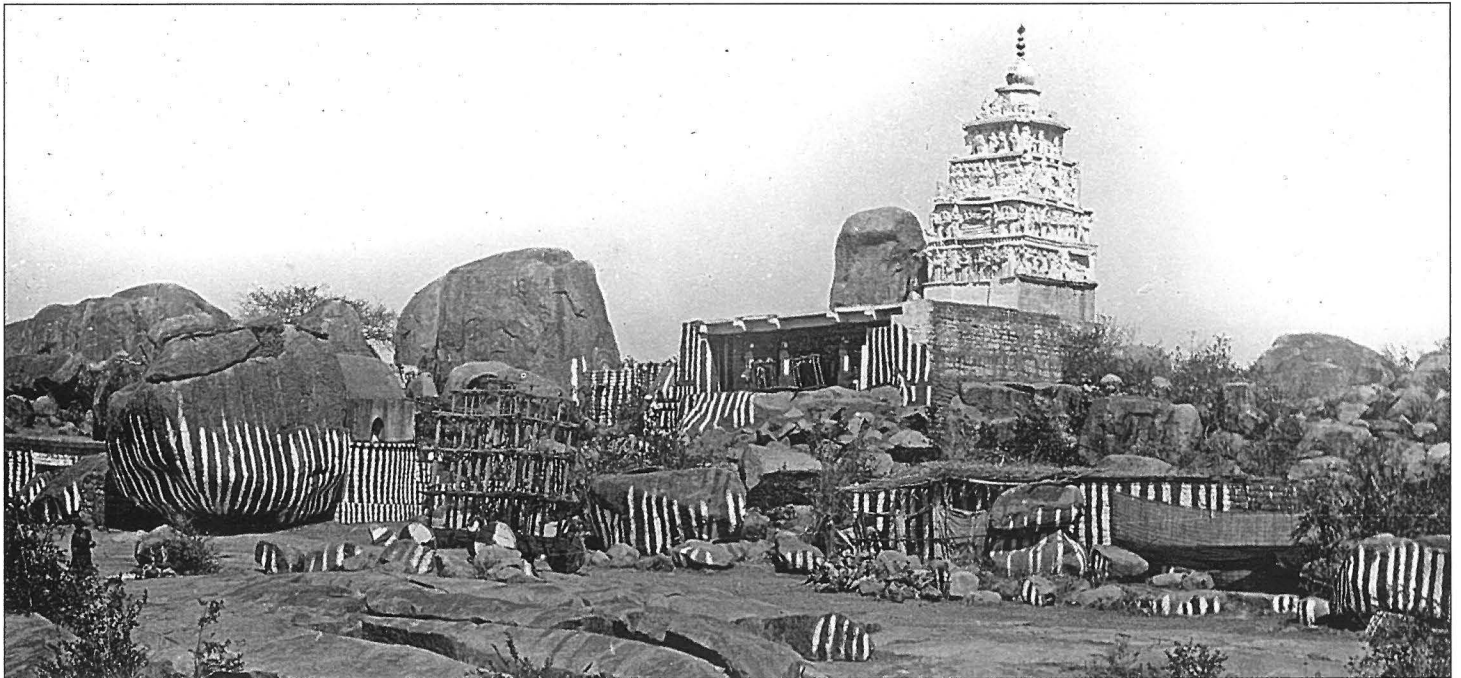
The lines above are from a letter from Mrs. Beatrice Warkentin, as quoted in *The Christian Leader*, 15 March 1947. Adjusting quickly after their arrival, however, the Warkentins, Beatrice and her husband Herman, with their children, soon learned to enjoy and find most meaningful their work as missionaries, particularly their work in the villages near where they were stationed in Kalvakurty. Tragically, their time in India came to an end all too soon, when Herman fell to his death in a well he was helping to repair in Kalvakurty in 1953.

The Nizam's Dominions

Rocky hills characterize much of the landscape to the south of Hyderabad. (FA)



A temple site in the Telengana area of the Nizam's Dominions. Pilgrimages to such sites feature in the great traditions of Indian civilization. (FA)



Villages dotted most of the area to which the MB missionaries came. Tribal people lived in settlements near the villages and predominated on the heavily wooded Amrabad Plateau to the southeast. The Musi River flowed west to east through Hyderabad. The Tungabhadra and Krishna Rivers flowed west to east along the southern borders of the mission area. Wonderfully picturesque rock strewn hills punctuated much of the landscape. So did temples and other places of worship and pilgrimage.

Paddy cultivation was possible where water was available. More commonly, semi arid as is this region, dry land crops prevailed. The area's north south meter gauge railway line, Hyderabad to Mahbubnagar, was opened in 1916, extended to Wanaparthy in 1917, extended to Alampur and beyond in 1927-28. Hinterland travel for the overwhelming majority of the villagers of the area was almost exclusively by foot or ox cart into the 1940s and early 1950s. Travel by buses, lorries and motor cars became increasingly common after World War II.

The cities of the area housed people of many ethnic, religious, language, regional and nationality backgrounds. The horizons of all but a handful of the villagers, however, were geographically limited.

The MB missionaries entered their mission area under the authority of the British and the Nizams. But they had very little substantive contact with either group, and served very different purposes. For the British, India was the "brightest jewel" in their colonial empire, a land yielding, and, managed efficiently, likely additionally to yield great wealth for their coffers.

Feudal rulers, the Nizams sought to keep the villagers of their territories in their villages and the surpluses of village production and regional trade for their own use, show and tell.

In short, the British needed the Nizams in the stabilization of their Indian empire and the Nizams responded in kind. Nizam Osman Ali Khan Bahadur backed Britain and its allies firmly in World Wars I and II, during both periods sending troops as well as raising war chests. Without British support the Nizams would not always have been able to defend their Dominions, or, in instances, to meet their debts. Forty percent of the land and 33 percent of the population of the State of Hyderabad in the early 1940s were directly

Along one of the main streets of Hyderabad, 1940. (EA)





(Above) His Highness
Mir Mabbub Ali Khan
Bahadur, Nizam of
Hyderabad, 1869-1911.
(Mudiraj)



(Above right) His
Highness Mir Osman
Ali Khan Bahadur,
Nizam of Hyderabad,
1911-1948. (Mudiraj)

under the feudal authority of the Nizam and his military and other *jagirs* (cohorts). The “balances” in land and peoples, some under the rule of Hindu *rajas*, while technically free, were, like the lands and peoples directly under the control of the Nizam, similarly subject to the “will of the Nizam.”

Meanwhile, to whatever extent they and their messages and other introductions were molded in the course of time by the circumstances in which they found themselves, the missionaries in the Nizam’s Dominions came in order to build an entirely new community, one that would render class, ethnic, nationality and other boundaries unimportant.

Finally, underneath the manipulatively political and administrative canopies of the British and the Nizams were the villagers in their villages.



The Charminar (Four Minarets) near the Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad, about 1932. (CMBS Fresno)



A durbar cum fair organized by the Nizam in Hyderabad, about 1942. (CMBS Fresno)



Dr. Schellenberg visiting with a retinue of the Nizam in Shamsabad, about 1930. (CMBS Fresno)



The Nizam's ("Mirror of Heaven") Falukhnoma Palace, Hyderabad, 1930. (FA)



Missionaries dismounting elephants sent by the Nizam to fetch them for tea at the Falukhnoma Palace, 1930. (FA)



Lord and Lady Curzon on a "tiger shoot" in the Nizam's Dominions, 1902. (Alikhan)

Early MB missionaries worked under the authority of but not "with" colonial officials in India. Here pictured with British officers in the Nizam's Dominions in the early 1900s are MB missionaries: (back row, 2nd from l) Anna Suderman, (3rd from r) J. H. Pankratz, (2nd from r) Henry H. Unruh; (seated, middle row, 2nd from l) Abraham J. Friesen, (3rd from r) Mary Friesen, (2nd from r) Maria Pankratz; (seated center on the ground in front in dark dress) Elisabeth Neufeld. (CMBS Fresno)





Villagers visit the mission compound in Nagarkurnool, about 1942. (EA)



Women and girls return to their homes in Kaukuntla with water from the village well. (CMBS Fresno)

The Nizam, His Exalted Highness

Hyderabad State (during the period of the Nizams known also as The Nizam's Dominions) was the largest princely state in the once British Indian Empire. *Time* magazine in 1937 identified Osman Ali Khan, Nizam at the time, as one of the world's richest men. Hyderabad was absorbed into the new Republic of India shortly after India gained independence in 1948. In 1956, during the reorganization of the Indian states, the state of Hyderabad was split up between Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Osman Ali Khan, the last Nizam, died in 1967.

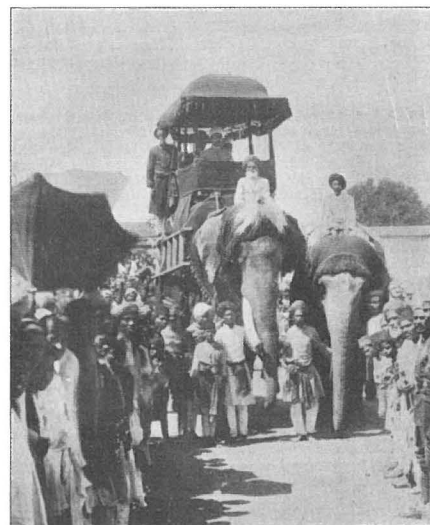
Geographer Bret Wallach wrote the following after a period of study in the Nizam's Dominions in 1984.

"Osman was the last of Hyderabad's seven nizams. The first had broken away from the Delhi-based Moguls and proclaimed the independence of his dominions. The British got a slice of his domain in 1765, when they grabbed the fertile delta of the Krishna River and made it part of what became the Madras Presidency. Unlike some other princes, blinded by pride, the nizams realized that the key to survival was to ally with the British, not resist them. The nizam who stood by the British during the uprising of 1857 was given the title, 'Faithful Ally,' and a successor gained the title, 'His Exalted Highness.' Titles mattered much in this world, perhaps especially since real power — paramountcy, in the jargon — rested with the British.

"The boundaries of the nizam's dominions no longer exist in the reorganized political geography of India, but they had encompassed 83,000 square miles. That's almost as big as Great Britain, and the land revenues from 2,000 villages were assigned to the nizams personally as their jagirs. A small circle of Muslim nobles, hardly more than a hundred families, grew fat as jagirdars receiving the taxes collected from nearly 7000 others. Facts like these explain why in his autobiography Nehru describes Hyderabad as 'an almost perfect feudal relic.'

"More than 90 percent of the nizam's 13,000,000 subjects were Hindus speaking Telugu, a language foreign to the Muslim elite. Not that the elite had much need of Telugu: typically, they visited their villages once every five years and left management to overseers. One elderly supervisor of the elite told me that even as a man of forty he had only once been to the villages that supplied his father's income; visiting was considered improper, he said.

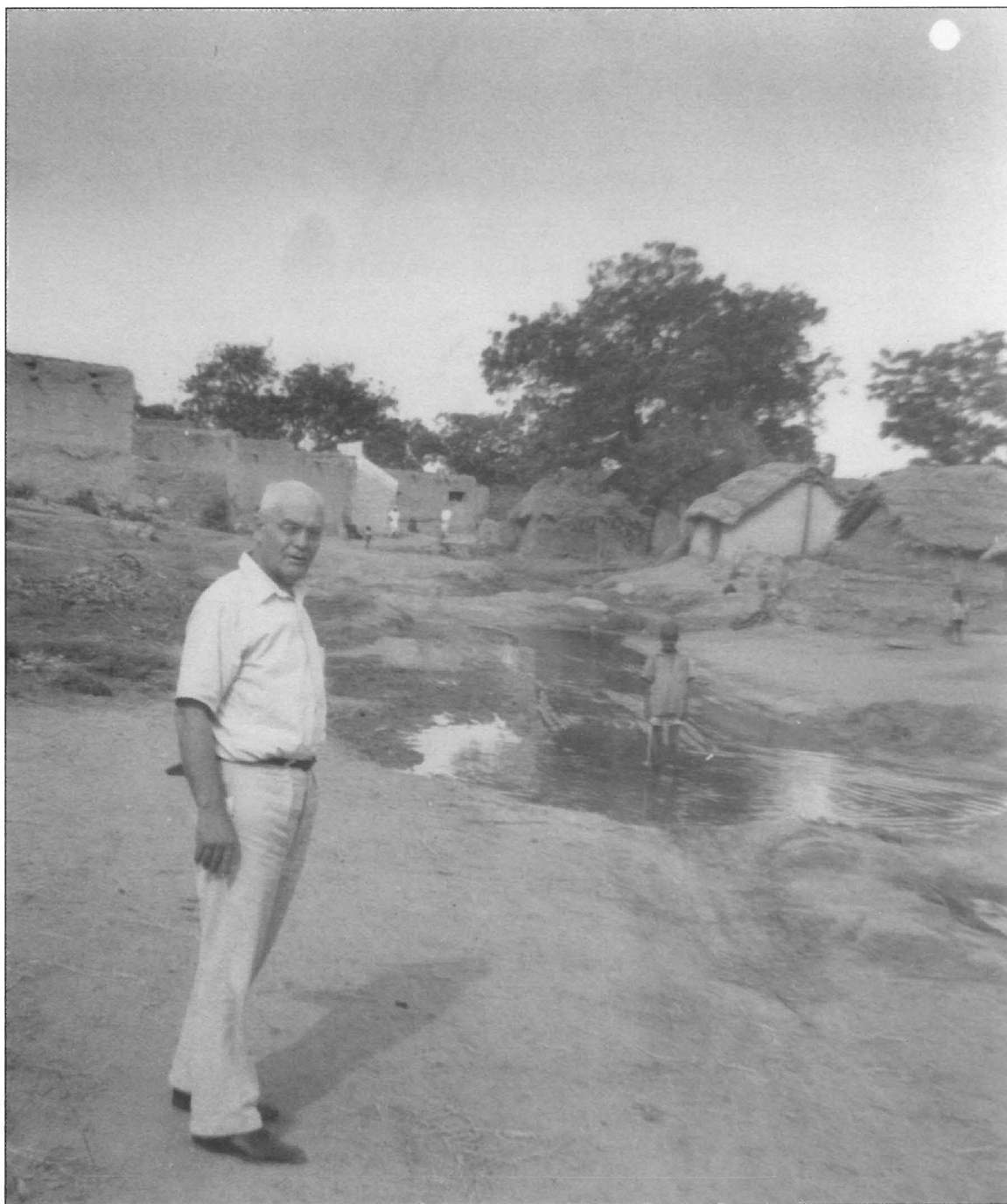
"Protected as they were by the British, the nizams were still always resentful. Out of loyalty or mere prudence, few Hyderabad nobles dared to fraternize with the state's British Residents. The Resident himself — the official appointed to represent the Crown in its dealings with the nizam — lived in the immense, porticoed Residency, its steps flanked by lions and its private spaces protected perhaps more functionally by heavy bars and gates."



"Nawab Sulaiman Ali Khan Babadur returns home after visiting the Hon'ble the British Resident." (Mudiraj 1934)

4

Villages



*Missionary John Wiebe
near the village of
Amarachinta, 1953. (FA)*

According to Census of India definitions in the first decades of the twentieth century a “village” in the Nizam’s Dominions was, “A collection of houses situated generally in the center of a definite land area having well marked boundaries and constituting a unit for administrative purposes ... often containing two or more residential villages.” According to Mazhar Husain (1944: 66-67), Commissioner of the Census for the State of Hyderabad in 1941 in turn, a “typical residential village” could be described as follows:

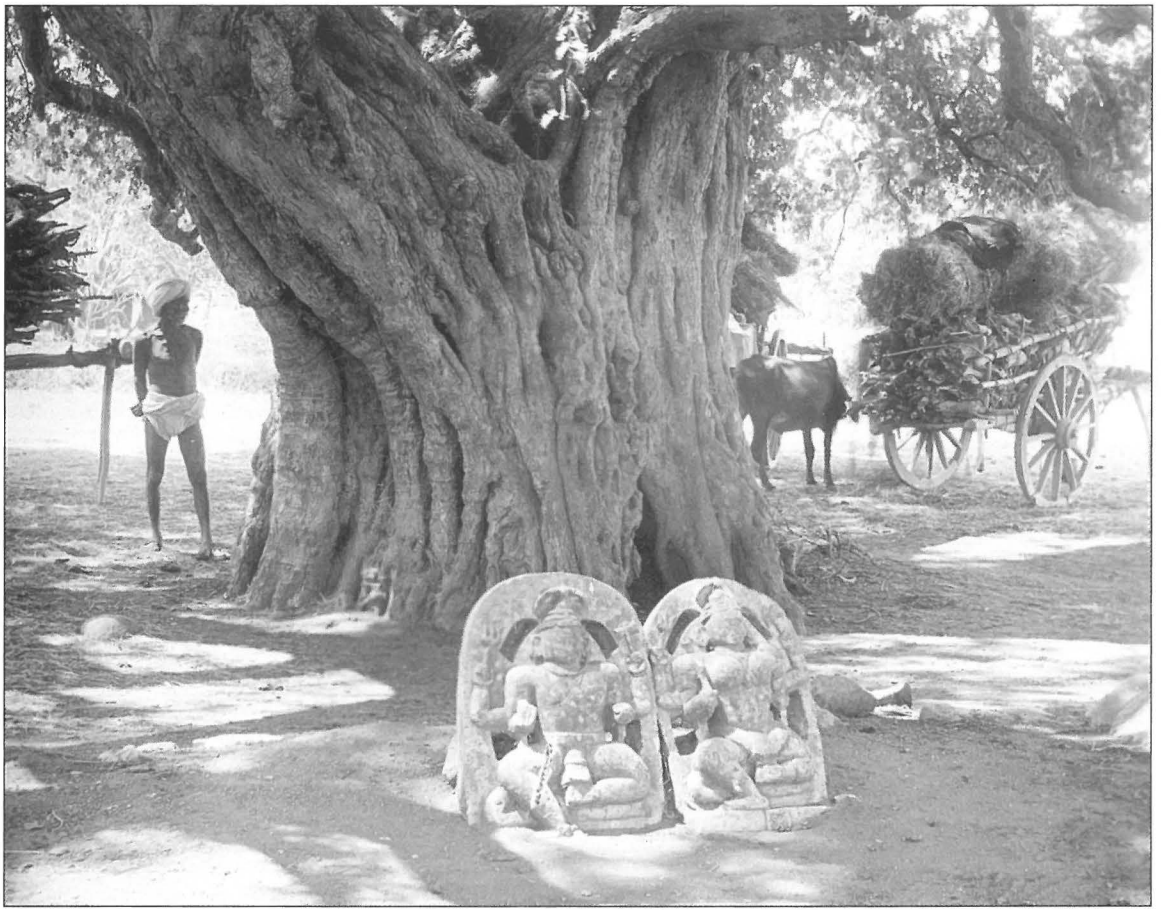
The site is usually on the unculturable wasteland and slightly rocky. The houses are mostly of mud with red country tile roofs. Groups of houses embowered in large tamarind, mango, neem, papal and other large shady trees, give the village a picturesque appearance. There are no streets or roads within the village, but narrow crooked lanes formed by the land left out between houses. There are always: a chauri, a place for travelers to stop and the village headmen to use as their office; an ashurkhana; places of worship; and public wells. There are quite a number of private owned wells for drinking water and for the use of household purposes. Surrounding the habitable area (gawthan) is usually the village grazing ground (gairan).

And most importantly for us here, as Husain continues (1944:67):

The depressed castes (Dalits) in almost all of (the Nizam’s Dominions) villages have their huts away from the main village, in a more neglected and dirty quarter known as the depressed class pallem of the village.

“The distinctiveness” of the two principal sections of the villages of the MB mission area — the main section or “clean caste” area and the *pallem* — has become much less overtly noticeable, especially in larger villages, since about the 1970s. Whatever their backgrounds, professionals like doctors and teachers can now find accommodation almost wherever they wish. Dalits have been able to move to better sites in many settings, often under government assistance. New residential areas have opened up for those with the money to pay. The open areas between the main sections and the *pallems* of many villages have been built up. Commercial developments alongside bigger roads and highways house and accommodate people of all backgrounds. As new opportunities have opened up, older village distinctions have lost some of their edge.

But important as the changes have been, and they have been very important, *pallems* were easily distinguishable in the days of the Nizams, the days of the missionaries. And, separate as they were, they represented also the separate and distinctive lifestyles and life chances of their residents. Among the descendents of the earliest people of the area, their forbears had been “ground down,” crushed beneath the encompassing greater civilization of India as it enveloped them with its definitions of superiority and inferiority, purity and pollution, eventually to the understanding that everything associated with them at the bottom of the hierarchy of castes was base and vile, while everything associated with the definers of the system at the top, its Brahmins, was to be heralded.



Representations of deities under a banyan tree (mari chettu) at the center of a village in the Mahbubnagar area, 1929. (FA)



A "chariot of the gods" within its enclosure just outside Shadnagar, one of the early MB missionary families to the left, a guard on horseback to the right. (CMBS Fresno)

W. V. Grigson (1947: 103-105), revenue minister of the government of Hyderabad, said the following about the living conditions of the Dalits in the state to the state's legislative assembly in 1947:

Wherever you go in the state ... the houses of (Dalits) are poor, and the water facilities, save where they have been recently improved by Government or municipal effort, are shockingly bad. Quite often there is no well supply, and the (Dalits) have to depend upon water from village tanks, but even then are expected to take water from below tank sluices in which caste Hindus have washed their bodies and their clothes. Their people have for centuries been the virtual serfs of land owners, prey to age-long illegal taxation, forced labour, arrogation by landlords of the right to decide for whom they should work, and forcible repression of any kind of self assertion.... Their misery under all these evils has been almost unendurable.

Mahatma Gandhi called India's practice of Untouchability — the practice of dealing with her debased people as “no people,” outcastes, pariahs — the “black sin” of the Hindus. And so it was.

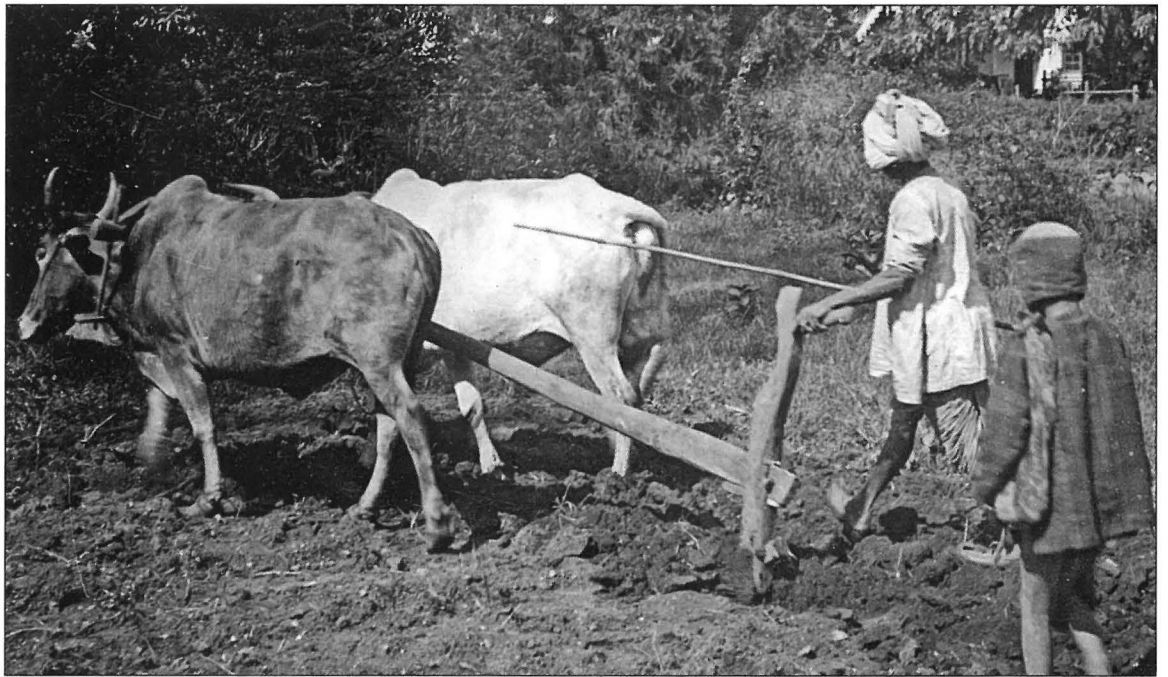
But it “worked,” at least insofar as the organization and continuity of village life was concerned. Dynasty after dynasty — including, eventually, the British and the Nizams — ruled with great pomp and power in the region. In the end, whereas the dynasties came and went, village life persisted.

Ox drawn carts (bundies), perfect for travel and transportation across the terrain of the Hyderabad hinterland prior to the introduction of motorized transport, haul produce to market. (CMBS Fresno)

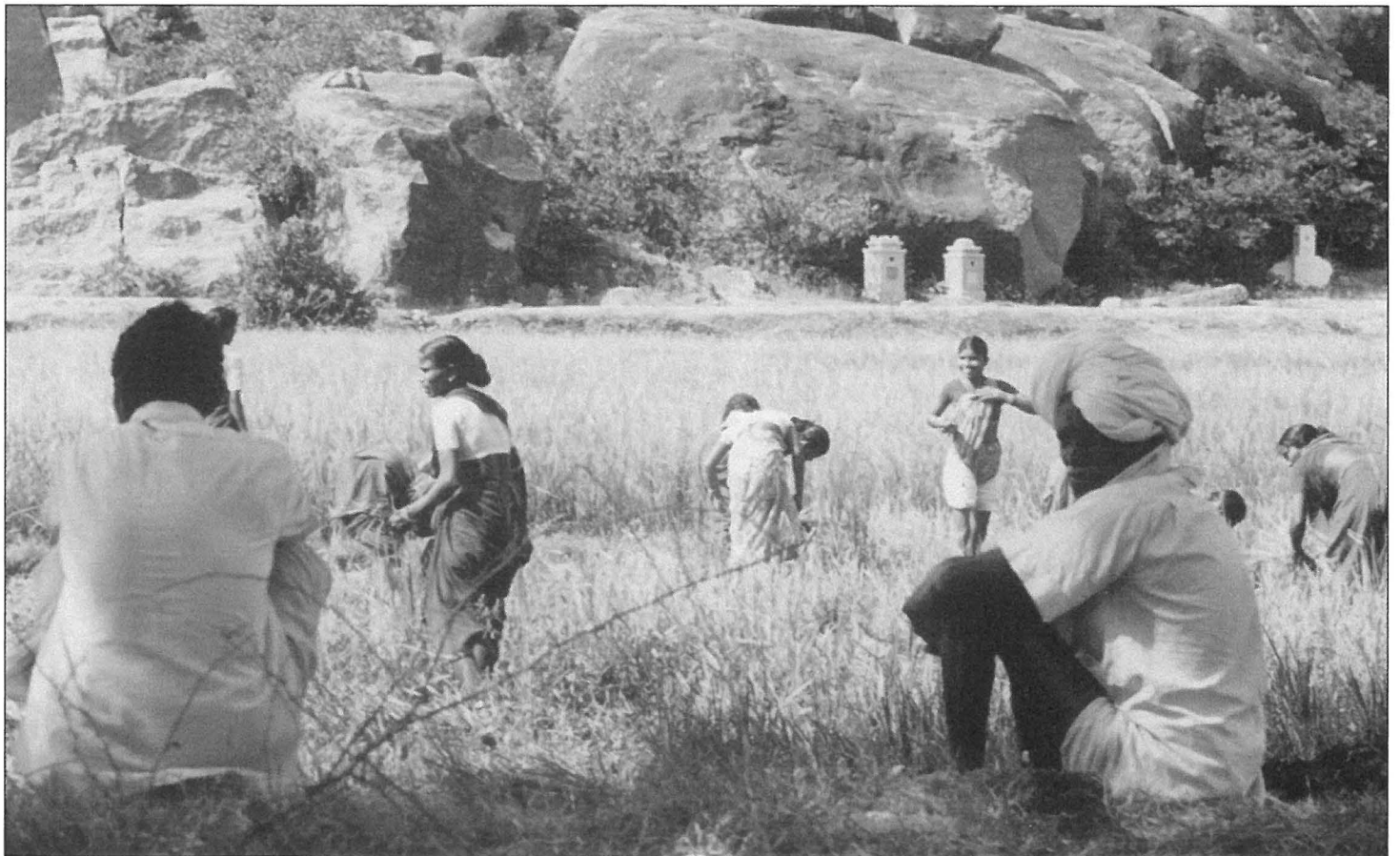


Villages were linked together by marriage, kinship, caste, pilgrimage, political order, recreation, tax collection, lending, borrowing and other ties. Locally, they had very much of what they required within themselves: assured and easily manipulated laborers on the one hand, land owners and craftsmen and suppliers and traders and so on, on the other.

*Plowing with oxen near
Jadcherla. (FA)*



*Village women
transplanting rice. (FA)*

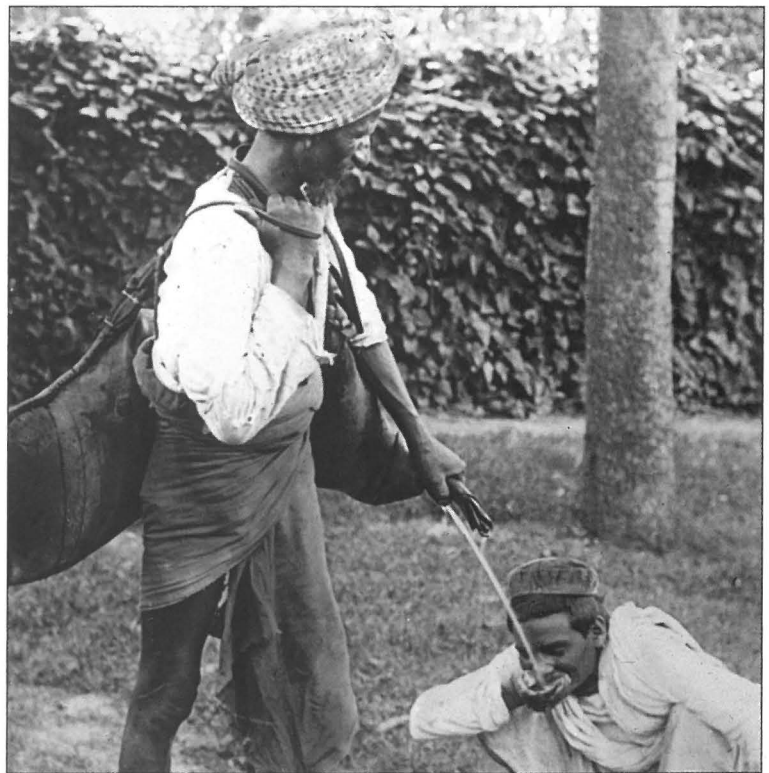




Drawing water for irrigation from a village well, the oxen driven back and forth by their herders. (EA)

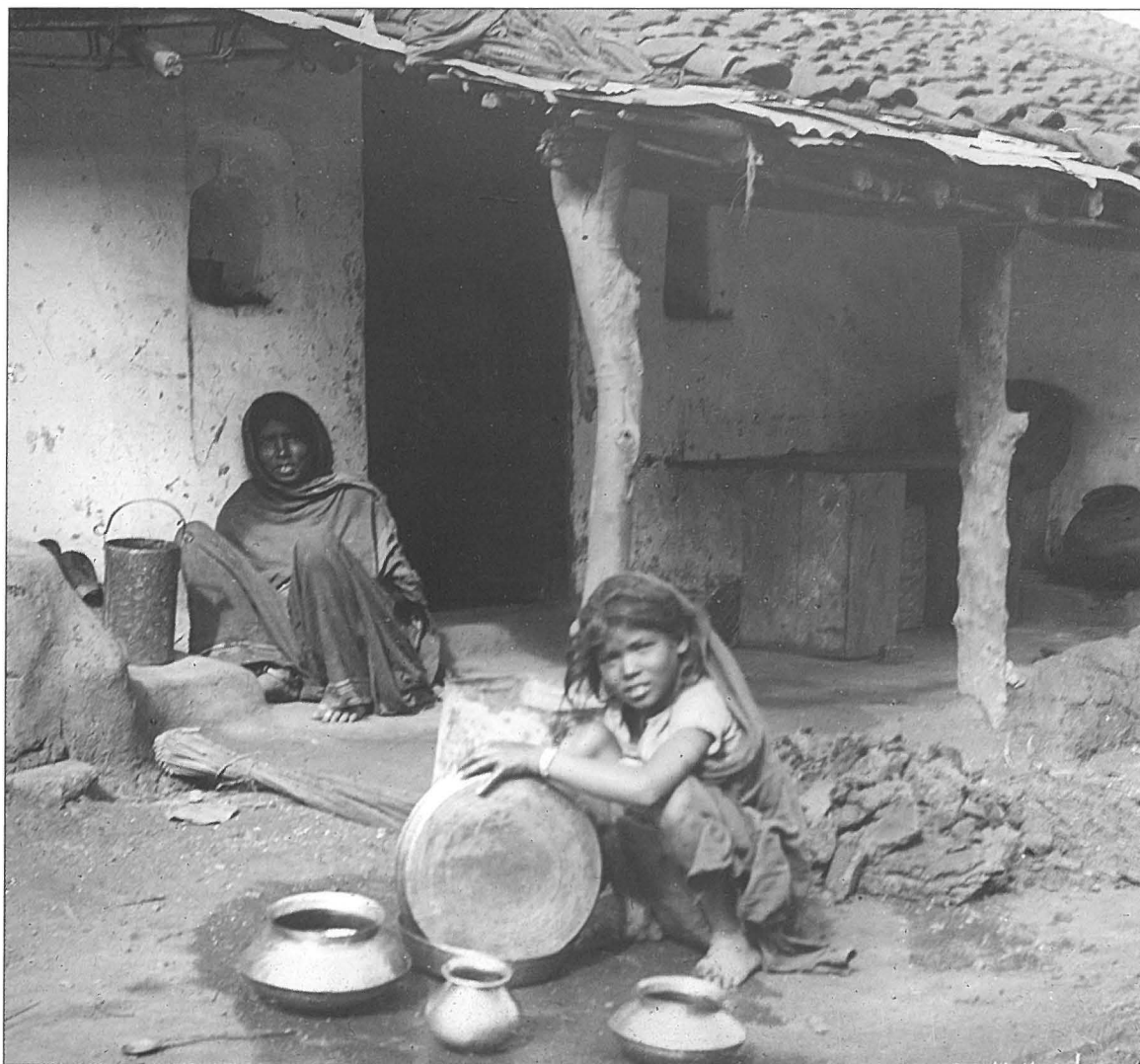


Women and children drawing water and washing clothes at a village well. (EA)



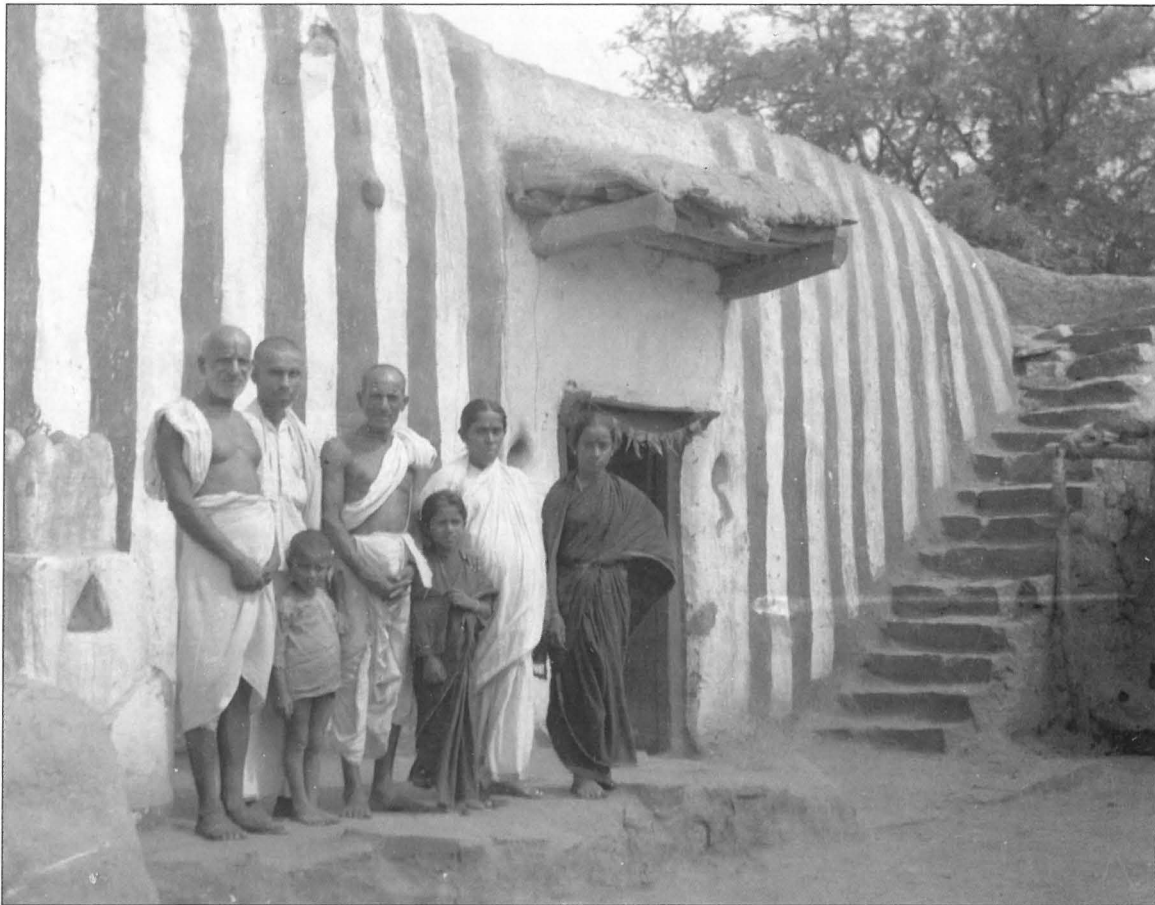
A roadside drink of kallu for a needy wayfarer from a handy shoulder bag. (EA)

*A woman cleaning vessels
outside her village home.*
(FA)



*Grinding and mixing
mortar for construction.*
(CMBS Fresno)





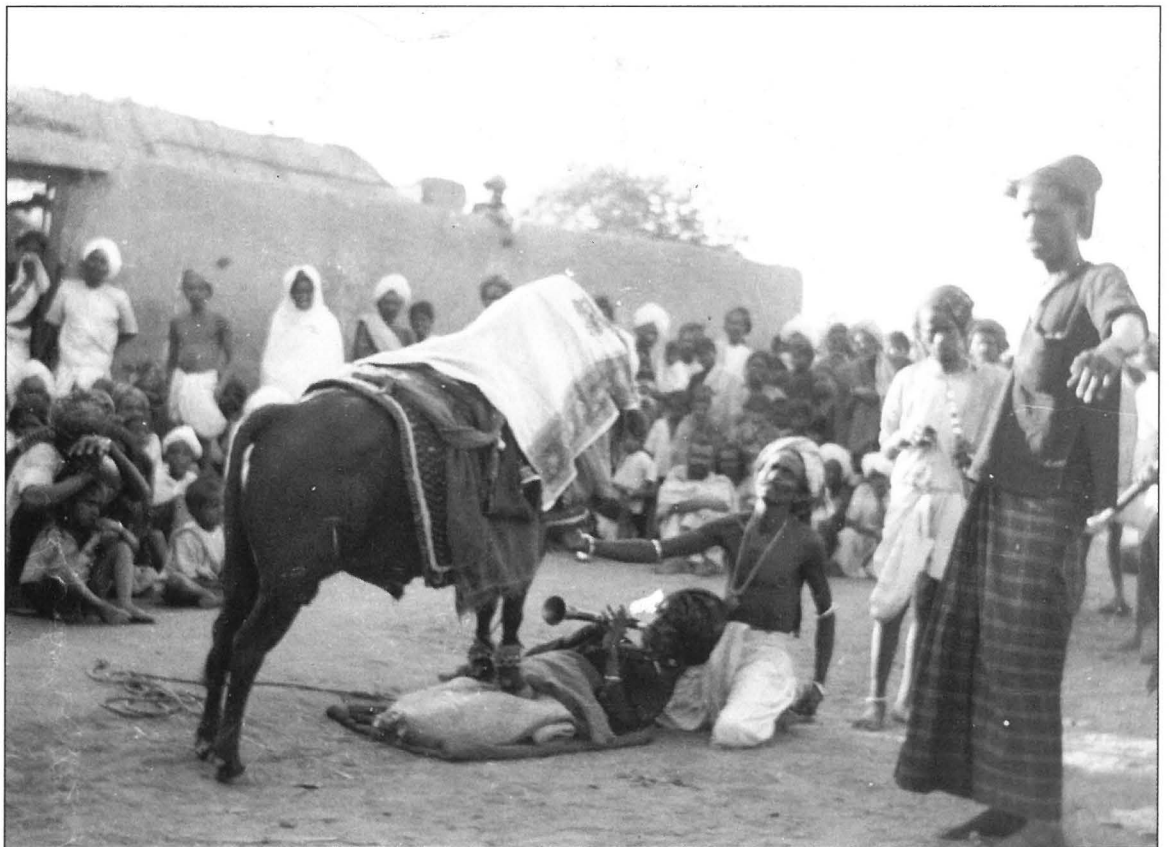
*Members of a welcoming
Brahmin family outside
their village home (with its
Vaishnavite markings).
(CMBS Fresno)*



*A village church worker
in front of his home.
(CMBS Fresno)*



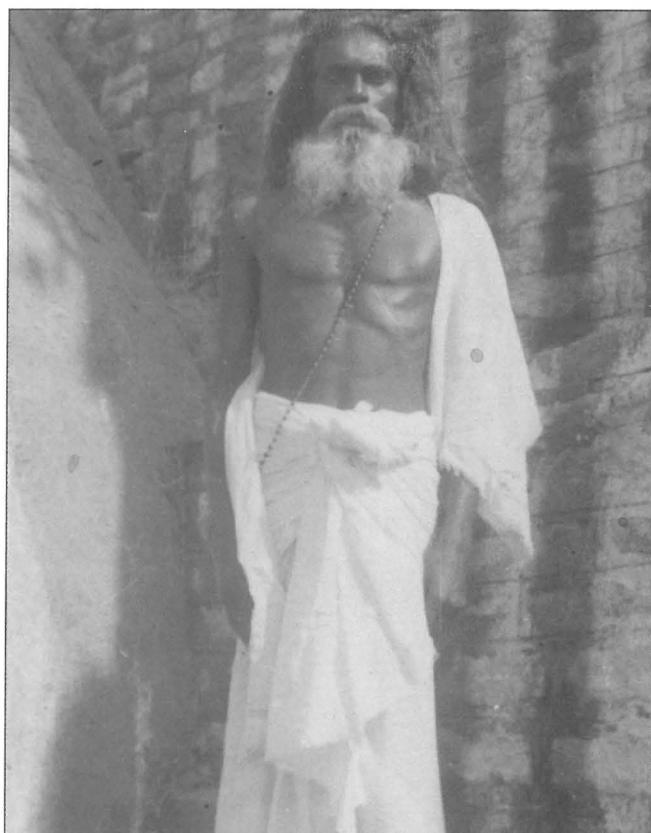
A village area festival not far from Mabbubnagar with its offerings in color and bustle, noise and engagement. (CMBS Fresno)



Performers entertaining interested passersby in Nagarkurnool, 1966. (CMBS Fresno)



Sandals considered appropriately sized at a temple near Deverakadra for use by deities during their anticipated night-time visits, 1944. (EA)

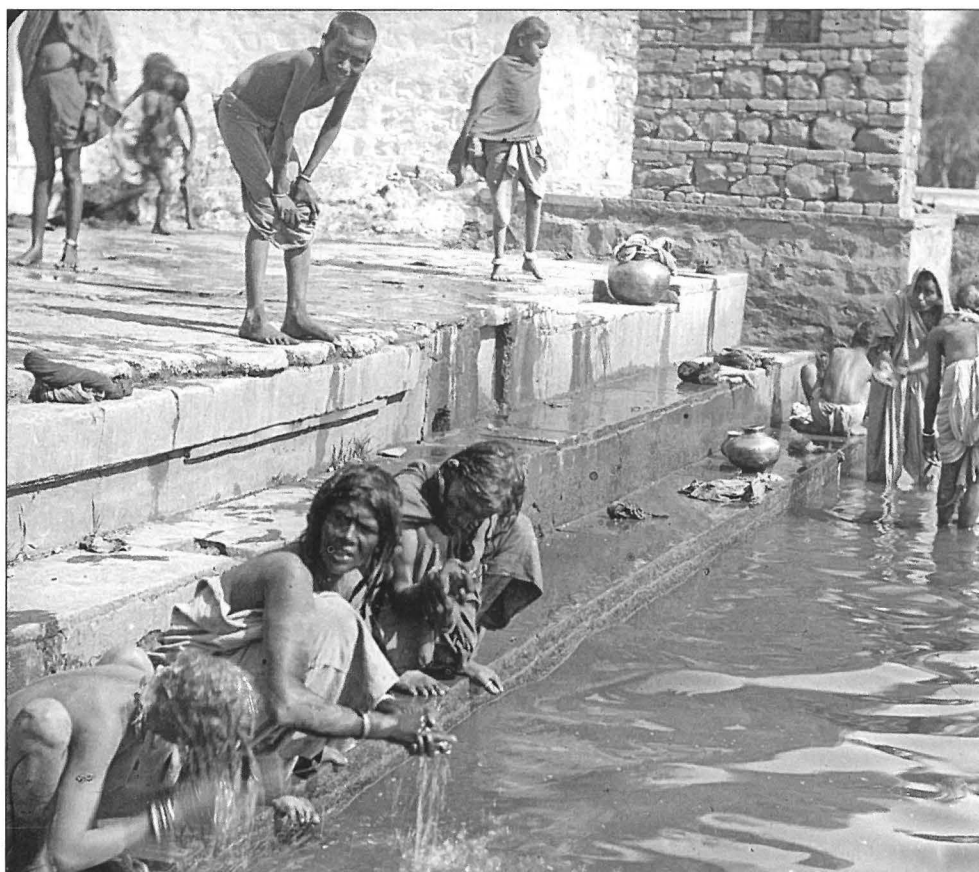


A priest at Maniyamkonda, a temple/pilgrimage site near Mahbubnagar, 1953. (EA)

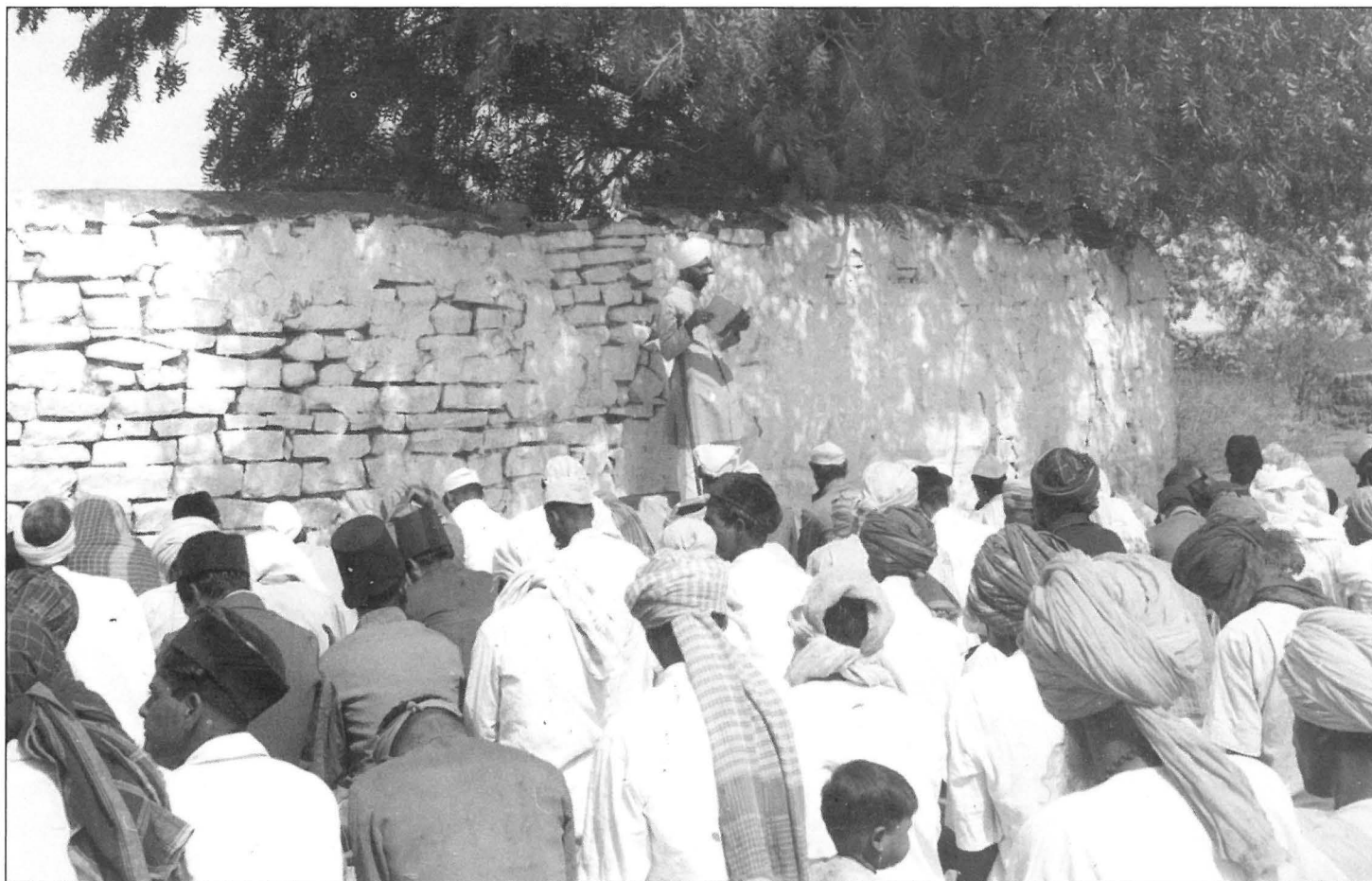


*A village temple.
(CMBS Fresno)*

Women and children washing and collecting water alongside the tank in a large temple near the Krishna River. (EA)



Muslims at prayer near Shamsabad. (CMBS Fresno)





A soothsayer/pilgrim walking along one of the roads near Kalvakurty. (CMBS Fresno)



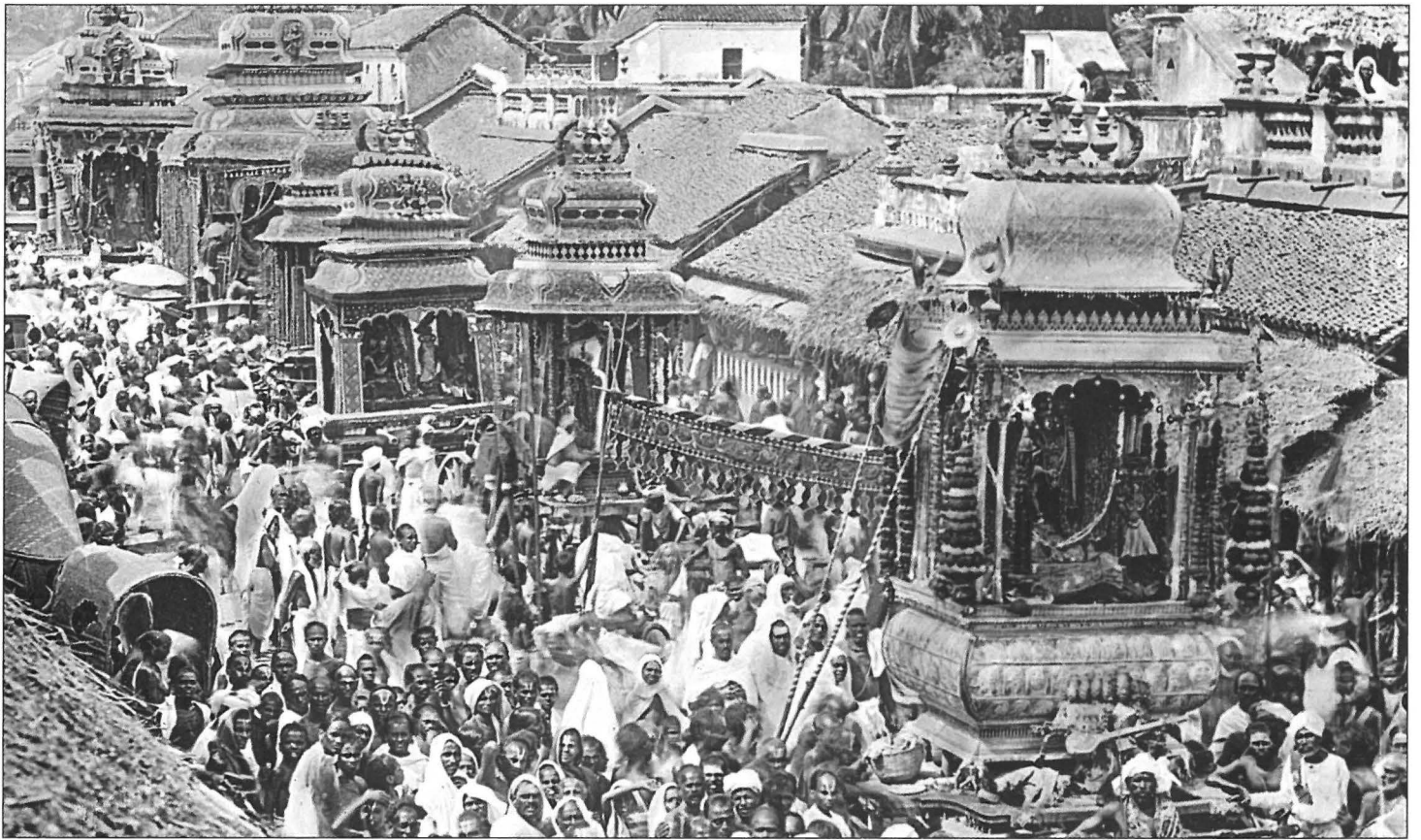
A devotee preparing and being prepared to do penance, pay homage, ask for blessing, in whatever combination, at a temple site. (FA)



The progression at the annual Rath ("Car") Festival in Gadwal, about 1930. (FA)



Pilgrims and others bathing in the waters of the Krishna at a pilgrimage site. (FA)



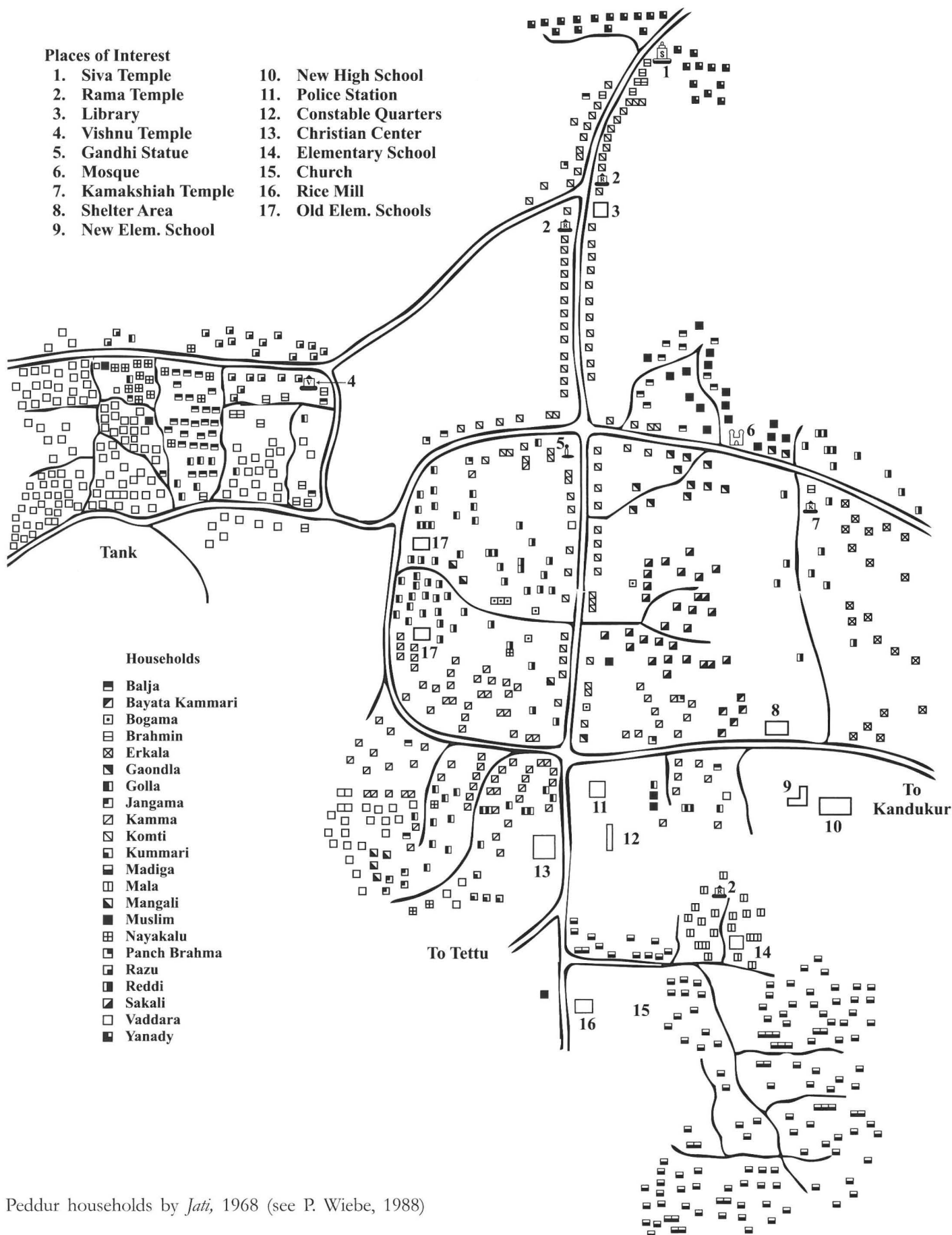
The procession during Siva Ratri observances in the Nellore area, about 1946. (FA)



A devotee suspended high above the Siva Ratri crowd, in Nellore, in faith and commitment, about 1946. (FA)

Places of Interest

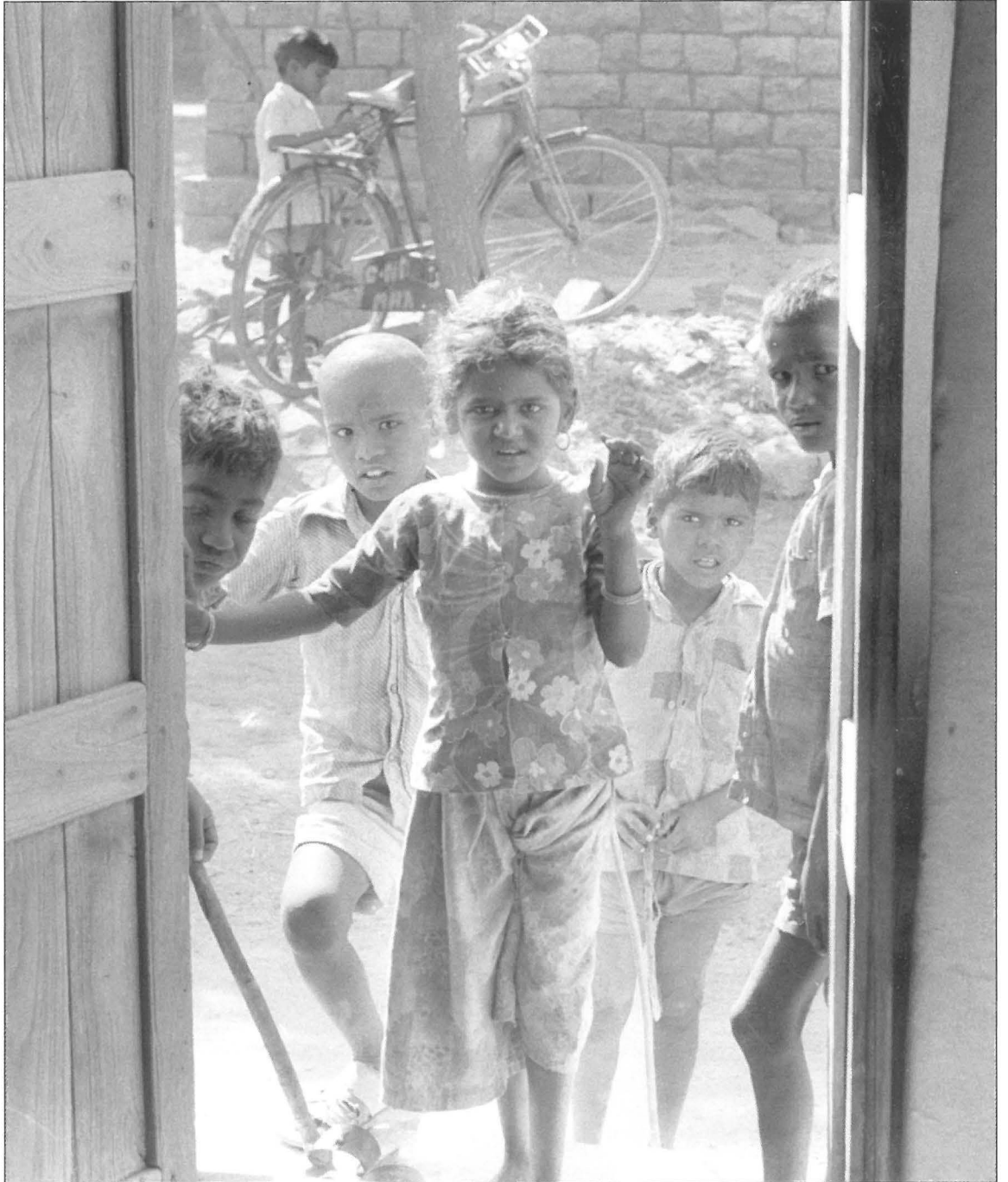
- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Siva Temple | 10. New High School |
| 2. Rama Temple | 11. Police Station |
| 3. Library | 12. Constable Quarters |
| 4. Vishnu Temple | 13. Christian Center |
| 5. Gandhi Statue | 14. Elementary School |
| 6. Mosque | 15. Church |
| 7. Kamakshiah Temple | 16. Rice Mill |
| 8. Shelter Area | 17. Old Elem. Schools |
| 9. New Elem. School | |



Peddur households by *Jati*, 1968 (see P. Wiebe, 1988)

5

Villagers



*"Of such is the kingdom
of heaven." (CMBS Fresno)*

Caste in India must be considered in reference to both its *varna* and *jati* configurations. India's *varna* system, which describes in the most general of terms the order of the civilization that grew out of the encounter between those who entered India over the centuries, as conquerors, and those who were here earlier, has remained largely unaltered for over two thousand years and is broadly the same all over India. It refers to four general *varnas* (or levels): Brahmins, the system's priests, interpreters and teachers, at the top; Kshatriyas, its warriors and administrators, next; Vaisyas, its merchants, traders and middlemen, next; at the bottom, Sudras, its commoners and farmers.

Below this ordering and not a part of it as it is described in the texts of Hinduism, but very much a part of it as it was put into practice, are Dalits (once Untouchables). Dalits, descendents of the original inhabitants of the land, were suppressed beneath the Brahminically defined *varna* ordering as it was constructed. What the Brahmins came to represent in the qualities of purity, the Dalits came to represent in the qualities of impurity, and, in the course of time, the occupations and diets, everything the Dalits were associated with, came to be regarded as both debased and debasing.

The *varna* system has all along been useful in the symbolic understanding of how India's system of social ranking first emerged and for classificatory purposes. While it is by no means easy to apply the labels Kshatriya and Vaisya in many parts of India, all across India it is possible to find Brahmins at the top of local caste orderings, Dalits at the bottom. And all across India, in reflection of what the *varna* classificatory system implies, it is possible to identify general groupings of castes ranked more and less pure between the levels of the Brahmins and the Dalits.

But India's caste system is far more intricately patterned than this, and it is only in the workings of the *jati* system within the larger *varna* framework that the entire system is operationally understandable. Two to three hundred distinguishable *jatis* or *jati*-like groupings can be found in each of the principal language regions of India. And it is common to find at least ten to fifteen *jatis* or *jati*-like groupings resident in an Indian village, some fifty or so identifiable by an Indian villager.

A *jati* is a "named and relatively small endogamous group with a distinctive style of life and often a distinctive traditional occupation" (Beteille, 1977: 40). *Jati* membership typically fixes an individual's identity within the contexts of marriage, work and worship. Excommunication from a *jati* almost always results in severe social and other disadvantages for the excommunicated and their families. While a *jati*'s hierarchical positioning within local configurations of *jatis* is almost always important, placements are never absolute. Sanskritization—the process whereby a *jati* lower down is able "in a generation of two to rise to a higher position by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon" (Srinivas, 1952:30)—helps account for the changes in *jati* positioning that occur. So do economic and political considerations, especially at the middle levels of the system, where positioning is never as clear as it is at the top and bottom.



Telengana villagers. (CMBS Fresno)



Women and children of a so-called "criminal tribe," better, marginal group, in the Nizam's Dominions, about 1944. (CMBS Fresno)

The ideas and realities around “caste” within the Indian system of social organization are, of course, far more complex than just intimated. What’s more, they are constantly changing in the interplay of influences past and emergent in contemporary India. Some of the old relationships, for instance the relationship between *jati* membership and occupation, have long been diluted, even lost entirely. Yet without reference to caste and its implications it is not possible to understand what it means to “be Indian.” Living in accord with one’s privileges and responsibilities, one’s *dharmā*, is important. One’s *dharmā* is correlated with one’s caste identification. And the violation of one’s *dharmā* has consequences, not only for this life, but also for all future lives. That is, morally defined, the caste system for all practical purposes is the “church” of Hinduism.

The villages of the area to which the MB missionaries came were largely comprised of people who belonged to one or another caste grouping: soothsayers and priests, iron workers and plumbers, shepherds and *dhobis*, earth movers and street sweepers, merchants and basket weavers, potters and cloth weavers, shop keepers and *toddy* tappers. But they knew tribal and migrant peoples too, peoples at the peripheries of the caste system, some of whom were in the process of being drawn in.

The villages were politically and economically dominated by the members of the principal land owning groups. The overwhelming majority of the villagers were Hindu. Frequently, there were pockets of Muslims too. The principal distinctions in village life—in terms of prescriptions and proscriptions, styles of dress and behavior and so on—were the distinctions between those who lived in *pallems* and those who lived in a village’s “clean caste” section (or sections). But the distinctions between the peoples within these two general settings were also, in general, striking and most colorful.



Village musicians for hire for special occasions. (CMBS Fresno)

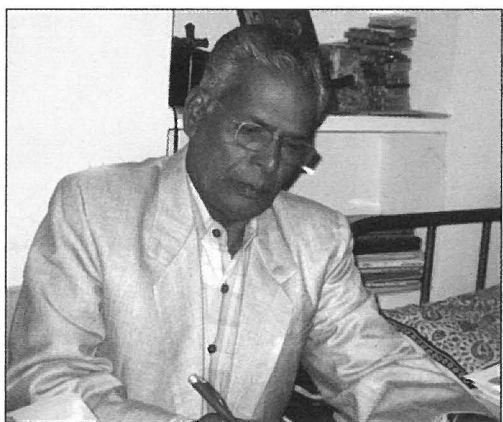


A cooking space within a middle class home. (EA)



Preparing chappatis, flat breads. (EA)

Ox Carts, Bonded Labor and Street Dramas



M.A. Solomon

M. A. Solomon, educator, writer and leader among the MBs in India, wrote the following for us when we asked him to think about some of the differences between “yesterday” and “today” in the villages of the Mahbubnagar area.

“Village life in the olden days was very different from what it is now. In my boyhood there was little travel from one place to another for want of transportation. If traveling was a must, it was necessary to go by foot or, if you could afford one, to engage a bullock cart.

“After toiling all day under the hot sun on the agricultural lands of landlords, landless laborers, including women with suckling babies, would have to walk the long distances home, often carrying firewood or produce in baskets on their heads. Upon reaching their homes, it was the lot of the women to prepare meals for the night from wages that had been given to them in the form of grain.

“Different caste and religious communities in those days lived in localities easily distinguishable from each other. Marriages between the members of different castes were very rare. Each group had its own way of living and believing, its own customary occupation.

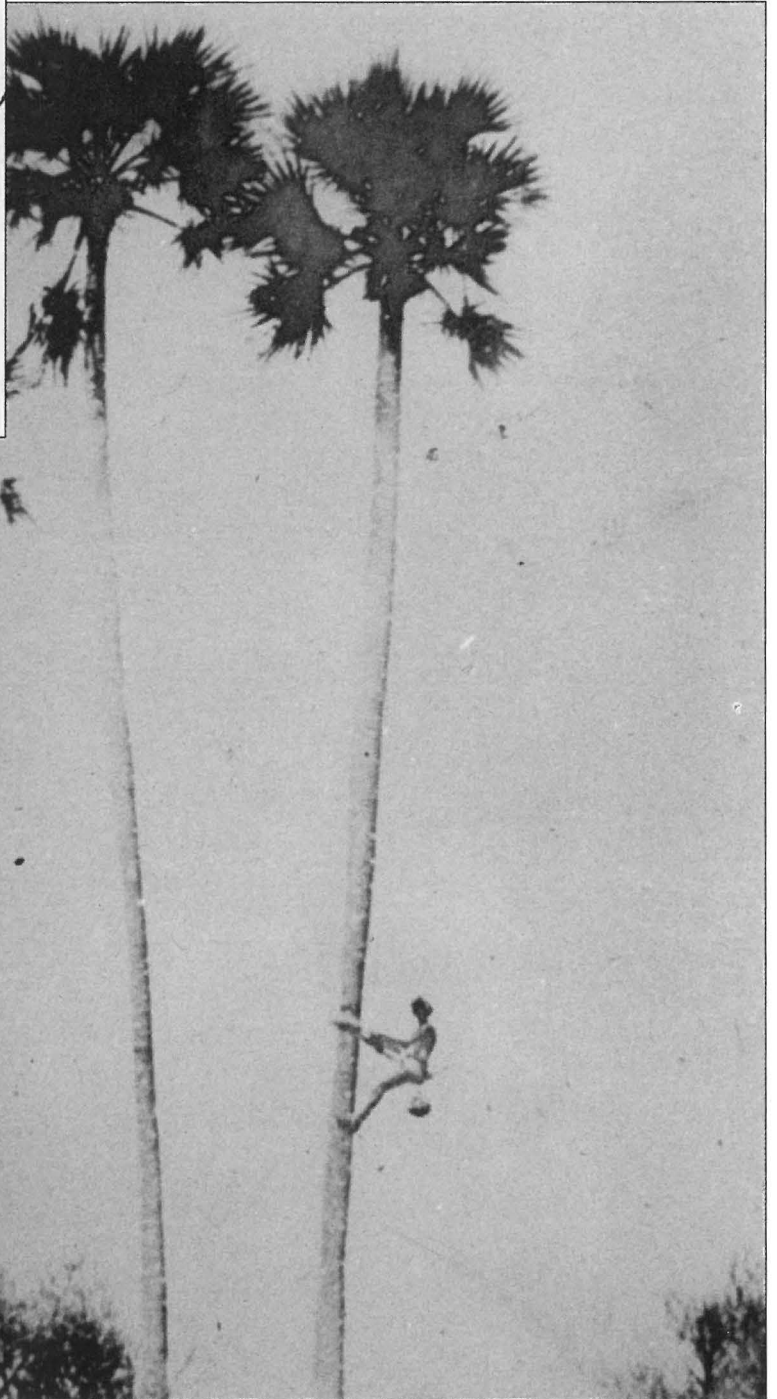
“Another thing that was common back then was the rich employing the poor as bonded laborers from one generation to the next. Laborers would borrow money from their employers for marriages or other special occasions and when in need. In turn their indebtedness often increased to the point they couldn't pay it back. The consequence of indebtedness could be good for the employer, for it could help ensure a regular supply of labor. It could also be good for the laborer. While laborers in such relationships could be, and sometimes were, abused, many also found in them a feeling of reverence and gratitude for their masters for providing them with financial succor, even security, frequently with kindness and generosity, in times of distress.

“Street dramas enacted by traveling drama groups were once common in many villages. The dramas, based on some folklore or Hindu epic or the life and times of one or another great king, would begin at nine or so in the evening, after the work of the day was finished, and last till the early hours of the next day. Burrakathas, the long sing song and rhythmic narrations of folk tales by a chief narrator supported by one or two others with or without instruments, which lasted long into the night, were also common. Electricity didn't come into most villages until the 1960s or 1970s. I heard a radio for the first time in 1962.”



Collecting the sap of various types of palm trees to prepare kallu for morning refreshment, then, increasingly fermented, afternoon quiet and evening enhancement. (FA)

Climbing into the sky. (FA)



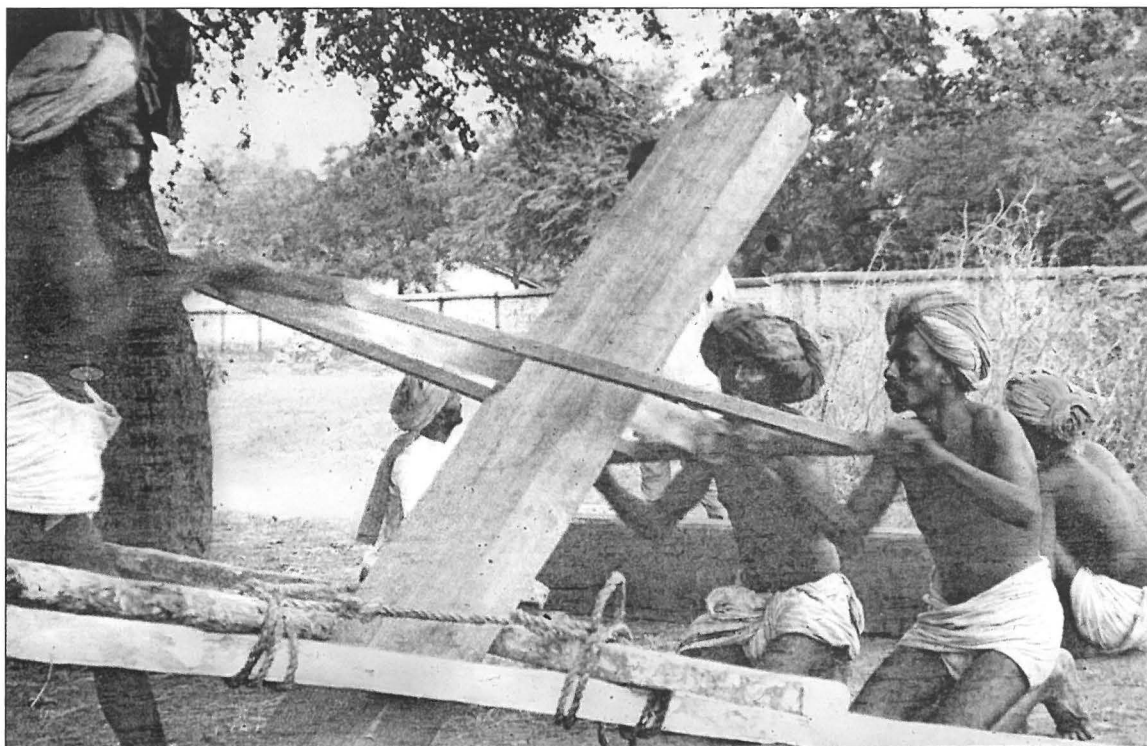


A potter and his clay.
(FA)



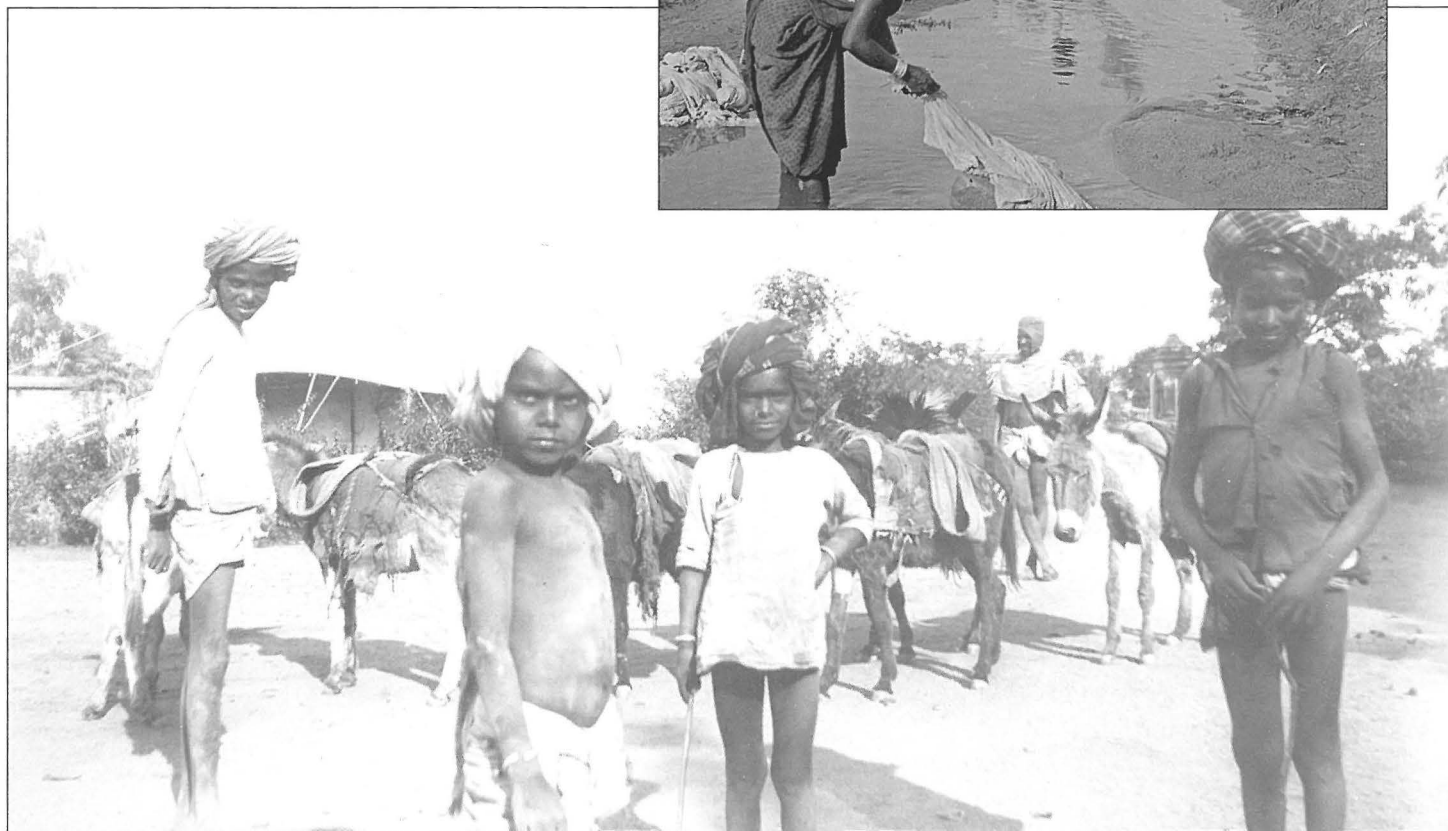
*Separating grain from
chaff with the help of the
wind. (FA)*

Sawing boards. (EA)



Sakkali youngsters and their donkeys after delivering clean laundry to their customers at the end of the day. (CMBS Fresno)

Dhobis (Sakkalis, washer men and women) at work in a village stream. (EA)





A haircut and a shave along a roadside in Hyderabad, about 1940. (FA)

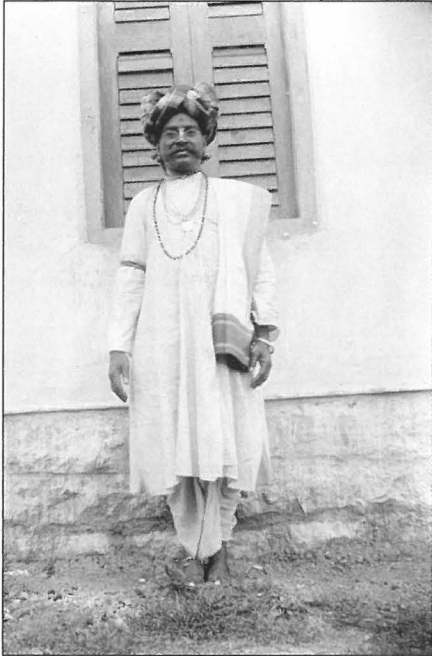


Snake charmers on the Nagarkurnool compound, 1944. (FA)



Village women. (CMBS Fresno)

*A merchant in Mabbubnagar.
(CMBS Fresno)*



Children of a wealthy family, about 1935. (EA)

*Villagers gathering outside the home of a well-to-do family to listen to a message by missionary A. A. Unrub in the Gadwal area, about 1953.
(CMBS Fresno)*

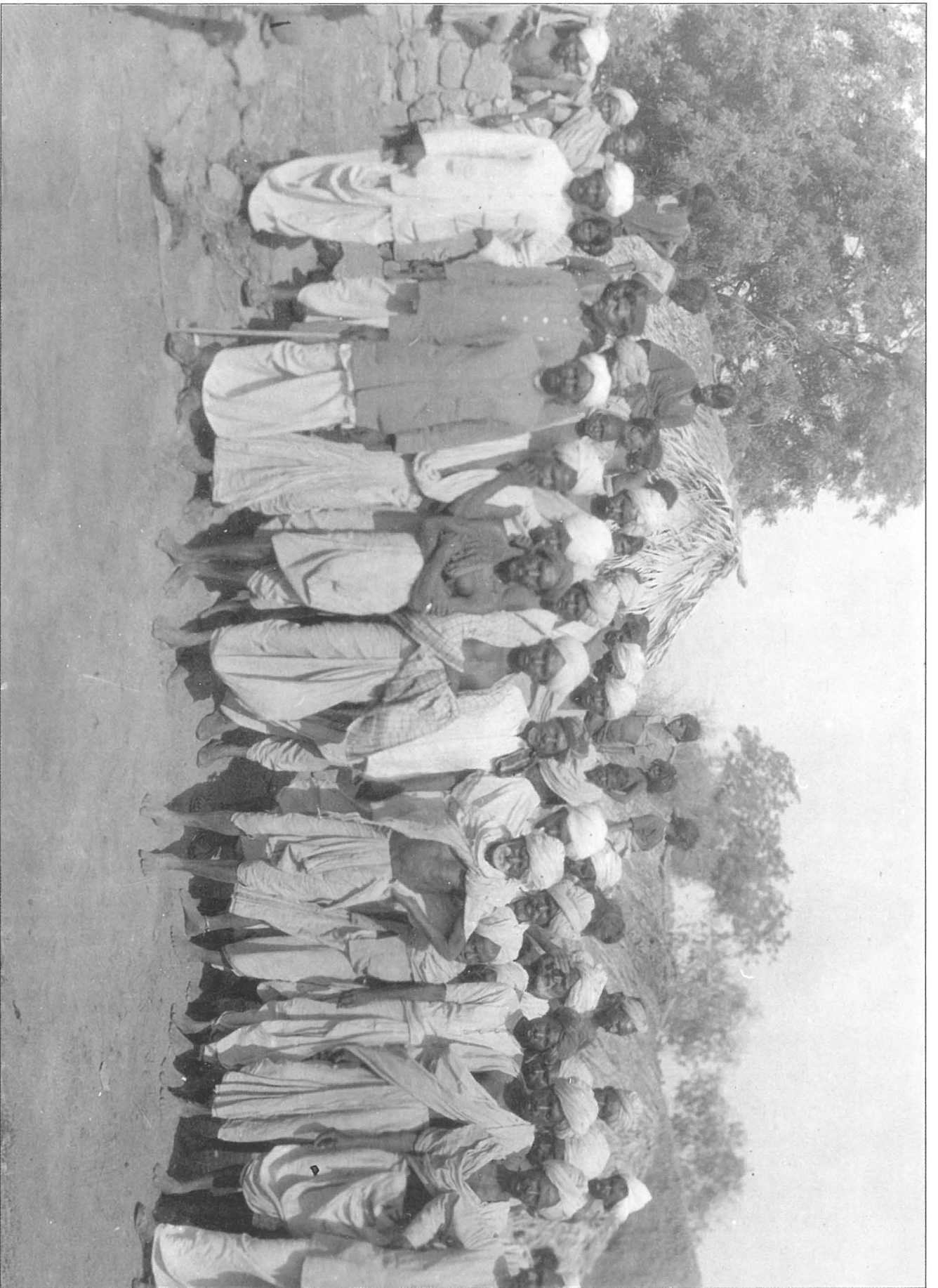




*Dalit village drummers.
(FA)*

*Missionaries D. F. and
Anna Bergthold with
tribal Chenchus in front
of their home on the
Amrabad plateau, late
1930s. (FA)*





Indian village men, about 1940, "with all the wisdom of the ages," in the words of missionary John Wiebe. (CMBS Fresno)

“Untouchables” and “Untouchability” Back Then

“Untouchables (now Dalits) are at the lower end of the complicated scale of castes. To them are assigned such unclean and degrading occupations as scavenging, leather working, the disposal of carrion and so on, and, therefore, they have been held, from early times, to be unclean and, consequently, ‘untouchable.’ Mr. Gandhi defines untouchability in the following words: ‘Untouchability in its mild form takes the shape of not touching or having any social intercourse with the untouchables. In its extreme form it becomes unapproachability and even invisibility.’ The untouchables, according to the present (1931) Census number 2,473,230 representing seventeen percent of the population of The Nizam’s Dominions. This number is made up of a number of diverse and heterogeneous classes. While they are collectively disclaimed by the higher orders, they have degrees of untouchability and superiority among themselves. The castes which come under the category of depressed classes are Mangs, Madigas, Malas, Mahars, Mehtars, Chamars, Mochis and a few others. Although the ... secular laws of the country are as much applicable to the depressed classes as to caste Hindus, the members of the depressed classes have been ostracized socially and religiously. The conservative orthodox Hindu regards the approach and touch of persons belonging to the depressed communities as sin. Not only does he ostracize them, he also refuses to recognize them, much less to encourage the effort to raise the conditions under which they live)...”

“The actual disabilities other than religious suffered by the untouchables are many. One very widespread difficulty is in connection with water. It is in many places customary for the untouchables to be denied access to the wells or tanks used by the other castes. In many villages the depressed classes have a separate approach to tanks for water. If any village draws its water-supply from a stream, the untouchables will be required to take their supply from a point far lower down. Although the depressed classes are conscious of their iniquitous treatment by the higher castes, even among them one is higher than another. Except that they all live together in a pallim at a respectable distance from the main caste village, one caste has little in common with another. Both a Madiga and a Mochi may participate in the disposal of a carcass; but one would not touch the other nor would the Madiga let the Mochi first dip his vessel into the well. It is not to be thought that the outcaste is without caste rules.... The depressed classes have no economic independence in most parts. Some cultivate the land for caste Hindus as tenants; some are farm labourers, being paid in kind. The wage level of the unskilled labourer is generally low; and it is when the demand for labour is at low ebb, during the non-agricultural season, that one realizes the wretched plight of these landless classes.”

And so on, in the words of Gulam Ahmed Khan (1933: 255-257), Census Commissioner, when he describes generally the conditions of life of the “depressed classes” in the villages of the Nizam’s Dominions in 1931.

Missionaries

North American MB missionaries in India, middle 1930s: (l-r, front row) Catherine Reimer, Helen Warkentin, Anna Hanneman, Katherine L. Schellenberg, Mary Wall; (second row) Anna Dick, Annie Unruh, Viola Wiebe, Elizabeth Balzer, Anna Bergthold; (third row) Peter V. Balzer, Jacob J. Dick, John Wiebe, Abram A. Unruh, Daniel F. Bergthold. (CMBS Fresno)

The service experiences of most of the MB missionaries in India followed roughly similar patterns. They included, first, intensive periods of language learning, then assignment to one or another of the mission stations. “Single lady” missionaries (as they were then called) were usually assigned to educational or medical programs, missionary couples to the more general coordination of the work.

The principal work assignments of the doctors and educators became increasingly well defined with the development of hospitals and schools. Most of the time most of the missionaries were required to do many things: tour villages; encourage literacy efforts; develop women’s and youth programs; produce plans; direct building projects; teach; encourage preachers; coordinate preacher, field association and other meetings; prepare reports and meet government officials; direct development projects; encourage wavering church members; raise money. They corresponded with home churches and their mission board and others



interested in their work in other parts of the world. They helped many find jobs. They ran hostel programs for school children.

With the variety and amount of work they did, few missionaries had much trouble with boredom. More problematic was the loneliness many of them experienced in the separation from all that was familiar in their home backgrounds. Periodic meetings with coworkers helped. So did the annual missionary conferences at which all missionary families gathered. So, of course, did the annual six week trip to the hills during the hot season. The beautiful south Indian hill stations of Ootacamund and Kodaikanal were also boarding school settings. Here parents could be together with their school age children, from whom they were separated much of the year, and here missionaries could meet others of their own kind for walks and teas and other get-togethers. Yet the problem remained, evidenced in the great interest almost all of the missionaries had in letters from relatives and friends, evidenced in the nostalgia most expressed in their references to “home” no matter how many years they had spent in India.

There were differences among the missionaries over mission procedures, the best way to build the church, the placement of particular facilities and services and so on. Heat and dust affected them differently. So did the intestinal parasites most of them picked up at one time or another. One missionary occasionally dropped coins from his upstairs veranda to poor people gathered below and once dashed from his bungalow to slash the skin container in which fermented palm juice (*kallu*) was being transported by *bundy* to a nearby *jatra*. Other missionaries were deeply offended by such behavior.

North American MB missionaries in India, late 1940s: (l-r, front row) Peter V. and Elizabeth Balzer, Helen Warkentin, Maria and John H. Lobrenz; (second row) Helen Harder, Anna Dick, Annie Unruh, Eva Kasper, Emma Lepp, Rosella Toews, Edna Gerdes; (third row) Jacob J. Dick, Abram A. Unruh, J. J. Kasper, Margaret Willems. (CMBS Fresno)





Learning Telugu in Nalgonda, about 1905: (l-r) Anna Suderman (later Bergthold), Heinrich Unrub, Cornelius Unrub, their munshi (or teacher), N. N. Hiebert, Elisabeth Neufeld. (CMBS Fresno)



On the veranda on the mission compound in Nalgonda, about 1900: (l-r) Susie W. Hiebert (with child), Katharina P. Huebert (with child), Anna P. Unrub and Maria M. Friesen, with servants. (CMBS Fresno)

The differences among the missionaries were sometimes problematic. Older missionaries generally held sway over newcomers whatever their differences in talent. The common understanding was that an education in mission work in India “began when you first docked in Bombay.” Given the need to learn a new language and adjust to a very different socio-cultural environment, such an understanding was not unreasonable in ways. In others, it led to the perpetuation of procedures that might well have been changed more quickly, and, at times, to unfortunate personal rivalries.

On the other hand, unities among the missionaries were strong indeed, and no one who ever heard them sing together the old German favorite, *Nun Ist Sie Erschienen*, towards the end of an annual missionary conference would ever doubt it. The missionaries had come out of similar backgrounds and faced common challenges in their work. Whatever their differences, all of them knew they had been “called by the Lord’ to service in India.

NUN IST SIE ERSCHIENEN

W. HORN

J. R. MURRAY

1. Nun ist sie er-schien-en, die himm-lisch-e Son-ne Und
 2. Wie lag sie um-nach-tet in Tod und Ver-der-ben, Die

strahlt durch die ir-di-sche Nacht. Da-rum troch-net die Trä-nen und
 Mensch-heit voll Sün-de und Noth. Doch durch Christum kann Je-der die

jauch-zet vor Won-ne, Denn den Men-schen ist Heil nun in
 Sel-ig-keit er-ben, Glaubt und le-bet so heisst nun ge-

Chris-to ge-bracht. Dem Hei-land sei Eh-re und
 lo-bet sie Gott. Hei-land sei Eh-re, Hei-land sei Eh-re,
 Chris-to dem Ret-ter ist
 Chris-to dem Ret-ter, Chris-to dem Ret-ter

1. Frie-den der Welt, In Heil-uns be-stellt.
 Frie-den und Heil der Welt, In Frie-den und Heil uns be-stellt.
 2.

Herbert C. Richert



Missionaries on an outing.
(CMBS Fresno)



Russian MB missionaries remembering their backgrounds at Christmas in Nalgonda, early 1900s.
(CMBS Fresno)

Their (and Our) Own Kith and Kin

“Mary Wall, born in Russia, was ordained as a missionary in North Dakota after completing nurse’s training and a special missionary course in Minnesota. She served as a nurse, for all practical purposes as a “doctor,” in Deverakonda between 1915 and 1957. Helen Warkentin, of Winkler, Manitoba, attended Normal School in Manitoba and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago then traveled to India in 1920 to join Miss Wall in Deverakonda as an educator. Miss Wall and Miss Warkentin worked side by side, in addition to their principal responsibilities caring for orphans and boarding school children; seeing to construction projects and so on; initiating and running literacy, health care and other programs. They stayed on together in their isolated posting through the years of World War II. They stayed on together (though Miss Warkentin left for a period to attend the death of her father in Canada) through the “police action” that put an end to the Nizam’s attempt to align himself with Muslim Pakistan just after India’s independence in 1947, though things again could have turned very ugly for them. Their terms of service in India ended at the same time when their board in North America determined (mistakenly or not) that the policies and procedures in the background days of the MB mission program in India should be supplanted by new policies and procedures.

The farewell address presented to Miss Wall at the mission hospital in Deverakonda in 1957 carries these words, among many others:

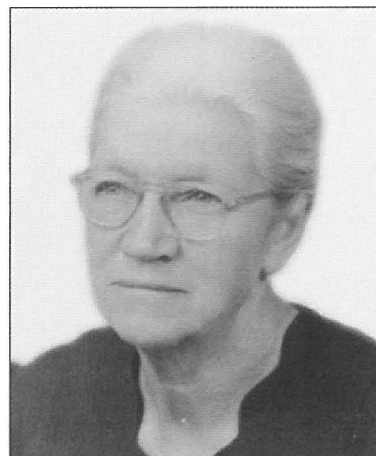
“Under your jurisdiction hospital was extended and the treatment was fine and always improving God’s grace. You helped many get medical training. You supported many orphans by giving them food, clothing, proper education and other necessary training. You have gained (our) love through your kind treatment and wonderful services. Even village non-Christians will testify to your Christ-like love and service. You loved them as your kith and kin and they love you. We wish that we could keep you with us forever to see not only to our physical needs but also to our spiritual needs.”

“Among the many tributes to Miss Warkentin upon the eve of her departure was this tribute by one of her former students (quoted in the *MB Herald*, 3 October 1975):



Mary Wall (CMBS Fresno)

“During your years with us, we have grown to love you as our own mother. As the principal you never assumed an air of superiority. You were too courteous to offend anyone. Many of our orphan children were dumped into your lap, and you took them. But for your color, you are bone of our bone and pain of our pain.”



Helen Warkentin (CMBS Fresno)



Missionaries Jacob J. Dick and J. N. C. Hiebert (in topees) attending a village wedding ceremony (shown here standing behind the bride and bridegroom). (CMBS Fresno)

Looking for the Nagarkurnool People



Daniel F. and Anna S. Bergthold.
(FA)

Daniel F. Bergthold (1876-1948) was born in Piatagorsk, Russia. He traveled as an infant with his parents to North America in 1877. In 1893, he was baptized. After completing his A.B. degree then marrying then serving as a minister for a period in Kansas, he and his new wife Katharine ("Tina" Mandtler) and their now six-month old daughter, Viola, sailed for mission service in India in 1904 under the MB Board of Foreign Missions.

The Bergtholds were met in Hyderabad by co-missioners already there. Six weeks later Tina died of "black pox" while on an oxcart trip to Suriapet. Bergthold's second wife Anna (Epp), who had come to India directly from Ukraine, in turn died in childbirth in Nagarkurnool in 1915. Missionary J. H. Lohrenz (1948:7) describes the deaths of Tina and Anna, and the death six months after Anna's death of the child born when she died, as Bergthold's "darkest hours." Yet he prevailed, after 1916 with his third wife Anna (Suderman) who had first come to India from Ohio as an "independent" missionary in 1898.

Bergthold together with his "two Annas" built up the mission station and its many programs in Nagarkurnool. He liked to study. He was very good with Telugu and an exceptionally good preacher. He started the conference's theological training and printing programs. His six terms of missionary service in India were from 1904-1912, 1914-1921, 1922-1929, 1929-1931, 1933-1939 and 1941-1946.

Bergthold wrote to the people of Nagarkurnool from his and Anna's port of final departure, Calcutta, in 1946, to say (quoted in M.A. Solomon, 1980: 41-42):

"We want to thank you for your love. As far as we know 22 January was the last day for us to see your faces. We felt as if we were dead at that moment."

"When we think of you we think of the patience and longsuffering" you have exhibited. We think of you standing by our sides in our testing and trials. Because of your goodness and help, we could carry on in the work entrusted to us in India."

"Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice: the Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything in prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

"When Anna and I get to heaven we shall enquire for the Nagarkurnool church, and then, joining you, we shall stand together before Christ."

Rev. P. V. Mark, one of Bergthold's coworkers in Nagarkurnool, wrote of him (in M. A. Solomon, 1980:40): "He had no favorites. The poor and the rich, the educated and the unlettered, the preacher and the gardener, all were equal in his sight. He loved us all."

The Russian and North American Missionaries of the MB Church of India, 1885-1975*

Peter V. Balzer
Elizabeth Kornelsen Balzer
Daniel F. Bergthold
Tina Mandtler Bergthold
Anna Epp Bergthold
Anna Suderman Bergthold
Peter J. Block

Arlene Block
Jacob J. Dick
Anna Berg Dick
Helen Dueck
Anne L. Ediger
Margaret Enns
Mildred Enns

Ted H. Fast
Esther Fast
Abraham J. Friesen
Maria Martens Friesen
Jake Friesen
Ruth Berg Friesen
George J. Froese

*Frank and Elizabeth (Dickman)
Janzen and their children, 1926.
(CMBS Fresno)*



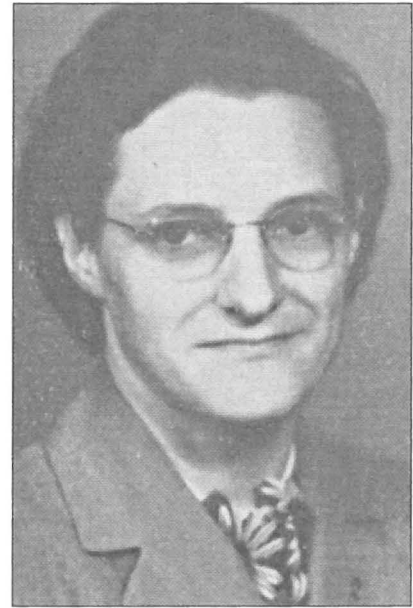
*Peter V. and Elizabeth Balzer
leaving on a village tour, about
1944. (CMBS Fresno)*



**As listed in Peter Penner (1997: 287-291). See Penner for detailed information and many stories about the MB missionaries in India, the MB mission board over the years and other information.*



Anna Suderman. (FA)



Emma Lepp. (FA)

Annie Bergman Froese
Edna Gerdes
Peter M. Hamm
Betty Hildebrand Hamm
Anna Hanneman
Helen Harder
J.N.C. Hiebert
Anna Jungas Hiebert
Nicolai N. Hiebert
Susie Wiebe Hiebert and

Paul G. Hiebert
Francis Flaming Hiebert
Abram J. Huebert
Katharina Penner Huebert
Frank A. Janzen
Elizabeth Dickman Janzen
Julius J. Kasper
Eva Block Kasper
Mary Doerksen Kasper
Jacob P. Klahsen

Katie Huebert Klahsen
Henry G. Krahn
Alice Bauman Krahn
Emma Lepp
John H. Lohrenz
Maria Klaassen Lohrenz
Katharina Lohrenz
Aganetha Neufeld
Elizabeth S. Neufeld
Frieda Neufeld



*Edna Gerdes and
Margaret Willems, about
1955. (CMBS Fresno)*

Anna (Berg, left, holding daughter Helen) and J. J. Dick (right), daughter Helga (front), about 1933. (CMBS Fresno)



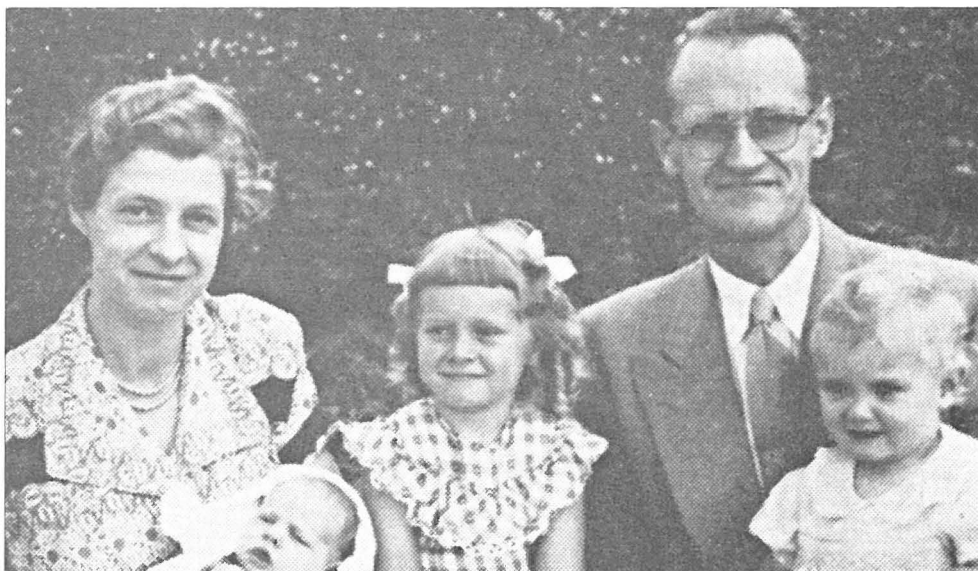
Mary (Duerksen) and Julius Kasper and their children (l-r) David, Betty and Jack, about 1954. (CMBS Fresno)



Daniel A. Nickel
Helen Martens Nickel
John H. Pankratz
Maria Harms Pankratz
John A. Penner
Anna Nikkel Penner
Anna Peters
Henry Poetker
Amanda Lepp Poetker
Catharine Reimer
Katharina Reimer
Marie Reidiger
Katharina L. Schellenberg
Ernest E. Schmidt
Evelyn Straus Schmidt

Katie Siemens
Dilwyn B. Studebaker
Mildred Heinrichs Studebaker
Anna Suderman
Margaret Suderman
Regina Suderman
Rosella Toews
Abram A. Unruh
Annie Elias Unruh
Cornelius Unruh
Martha Woltman Unruh
Heinrich Unruh
Anna Peters Unruh
John H. Voth
Maria Epp Voth

Maria C. Wall
Ronald Wall
Maryann Peters Wall
Helen Warkentin
Herman Warkentin
Beatrice Koop Warkentin
David Wiebe
Lorma Wiebe
John A. Wiebe
Viola Bergthold Wiebe
Franz J. Wiens
Marie Warkentin Wiens
Johann G. Wiens
Helene Hildebrandt Wiens
Margaret Willems



*Amanda (Lepp) and Henry Poetker
and their children (l-r) Alden, Phyllis
and Helen, 1953. (CMBS Fresno)*



*Dr. George and Annie (Bergman)
Froese and their children, about 1952.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*Ernest and Evelyn (Strauss) Schmidt,
their twins Gary and Garth and their
daughters Judith and Carol, 1952.
(CMBS Fresno)*



North American MB missionaries in India at Mahbubnagar at Christmas, 1958: (adults 1-r, seated) J. J. and Mary Doerksen Kasper; Viola and John Wiebe, Peter and Elizabeth Balzer; Annie and Abram Umrb, unidentified, Esther East; (second row) Henry Poetker, Annie Froese, Alice Krabn, Edna Gerdes, Anna Suderman, Jake and Ruth Eriksen, Ruth Wiebe Eriksen, Ted East; (third row) George Froese, Henry Krabn, Katie Siemens, Rosella Toons, Marie Riediger, Regina Suderman; (fourth row) Emma Lepp, Helen Dreck, Helen Harder, Margaret Suderman, Margaret Willems, Anne Ediger. (CMBS Fresno)

Villagers were very curious



Mrs. Deenamma (right front) and members of her family. (FA)

Mrs. B. Deevanamma Aseervadam of Mahbubnagar lived in close proximity with missionaries over most of her life. When Mr. M. A. Solomon recently asked her about what villagers back then thought about the missionaries, she told him this:

"Villagers were very curious. When the missionaries went out in the hot sun they wore topees (pith helmets). Most of the missionary men shaved their beards and mustaches, so some of the villagers found it difficult to distinguish between missionary men and women even though they wore different kinds of clothes. Some villagers were afraid to go near the missionaries. Some were afraid to touch them. They didn't know what might happen.

"In those days modern medicines were unknown. A village vaidyudu (doctor) treated the sick with herbs and potions. When medical aid became available on the mission compounds, attitudes and beliefs changed. Soon many of the villagers started to crave the medicines and the healing of the thellavallu (white people). Many believed even the touch of the missionary could bring healing.

"Most villagers' in those days were illiterate and poor. They wondered about the food habits of the missionaries. They liked rice and curry. The missionaries liked a little of this and a little of that and vegetables and fruits. When the missionaries came to village homes for meals they would carry their own water and never drink the water provided. This made people think the missionaries drank water containing some special element. The people didn't know about boiling water to drink. Also, the missionaries sat at a table to eat instead of on the floor and used their left hands as well as their right hands to eat, while we used only our right hands."

Mrs. A. Chandraleelamma of Shamshabad, also a long term associate of the MB missionaries and their children in India, remembers:

"Missionaries taught my parents Bible stories. They brought us up and sent us to school. They helped us get married. They made sure we went to worship every Sunday and never let us work on Sundays except to cook food. They emphasized faithfulness. They told us God would see whether or not we were faithful, and that he would be the judge of what we did."



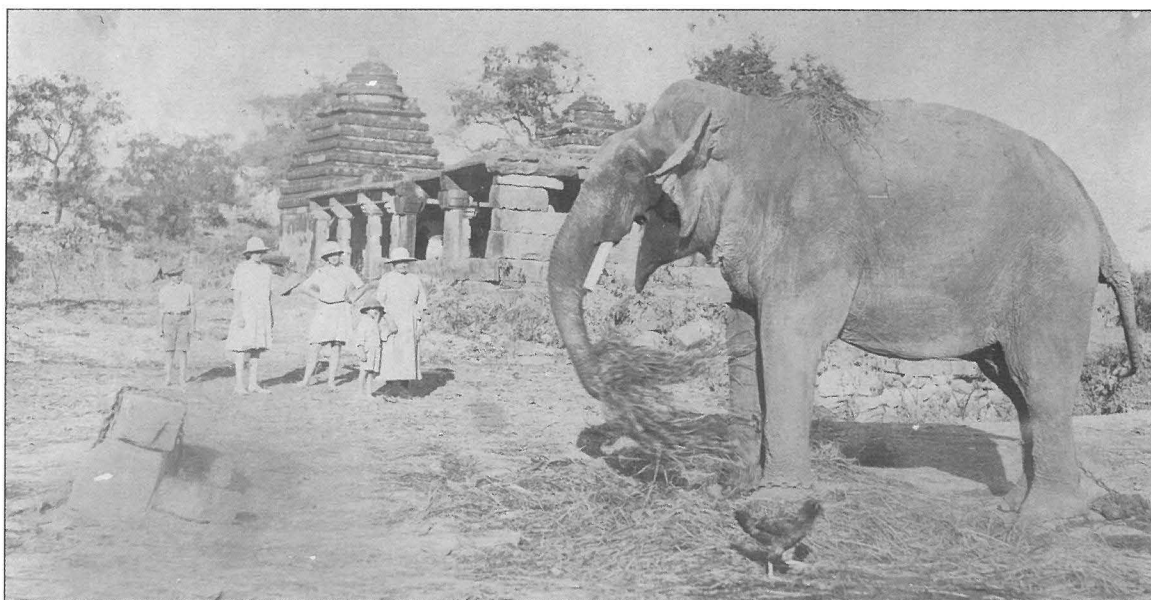
Mrs. Chandraleelamma and two of her sons, Jonathan (left) and Rev. Raju (right). (FA)



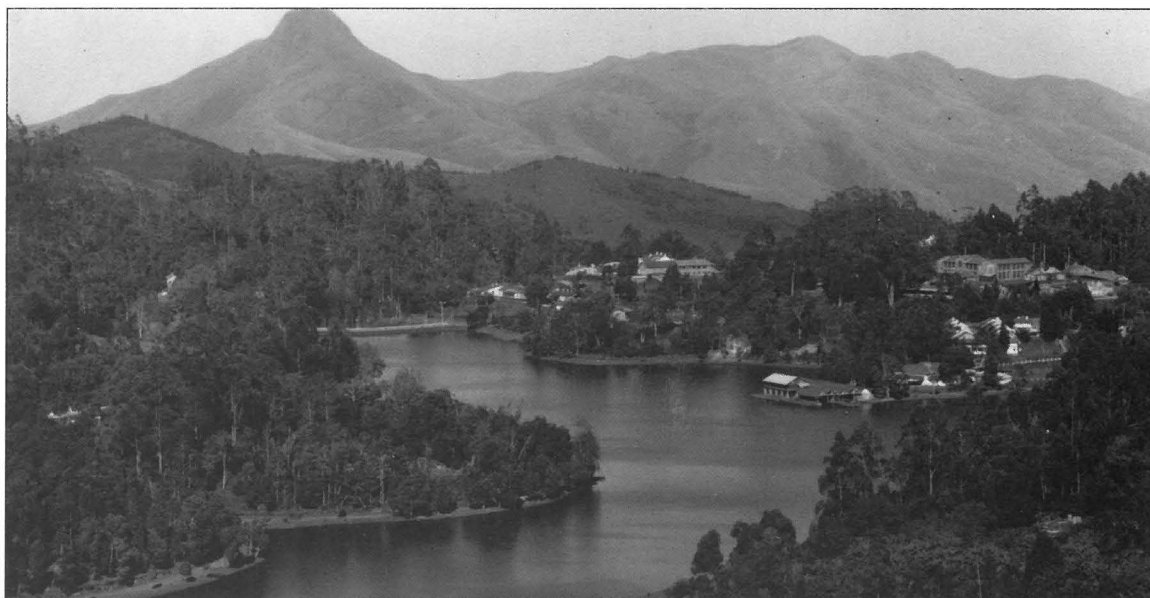
The missionary Wiebe family on the road between Kalvakurty and Deverakonda, 1941: (l-r) John, Irene, Paul, David, Viola, Ruth and Esther. (FA)



*Children with pigeons,
Nagarkurnool, about
1940. (FA)*



*Members of a missionary
family watch an elephant
amidst some of the ruins
of the ancient
Vijayanagara Empire at
Hampi, to the south of
the MB mission area.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*Most of the early MB
missionaries to India sent
their children to study in
British boarding schools in
Ootacamund (now
Udhagamandalam). By the
early 1940s, most had
placed their children in the
American boarding school
in the beautiful hill station
Kodaikanal, pictured here.
(FA)*

Compounds

The MB missionaries responded to the situation they found in their mission area by establishing compounds. This response was in part inherited from earlier missionaries in India, almost all of whom had done the same. It was also in part mandated in their new setting. The Baptist, Methodist and other missionaries the MBs encountered when they first arrived worked out of such stations, and they soon learned to understand that differences mattered. The overwhelming majority of the people in the villages lived in thatch huts. Whatever their teachings of brotherhood, the styles of life they sought to maintain for reasons of health, effort, developmental initiative and emotional stability were very different from the styles the majority of the converts in the area, Dalits, could approach. The missionaries came out of backgrounds with very different understandings of hygiene, illness and so on, and saw their purposes more broadly than would have been possible had they associated themselves exclusively with the majority of their converts.

Second, had they not understood when they arrived, the missionaries soon came to understand that the stations provided a place of refuge both for themselves and their converts. Social and ownership patterns and conceptions of privacy in the villages had always been far more collectively defined than they were in the backgrounds of the missionaries. With their walls, caretakers and bungalows, the mission compounds provided the missionaries

A view of the main buildings on the western side of the Deverakonda mission compound, 1952. (CMBS Fresno)



Settling the Field

The first mission station the North American MBs set up in India was in Malakapet (at the time still an outlying neighborhood of Hyderabad). Soon after establishing this station they set out also to establish stations in the hinterland of the “field” they had assumed in order better to “reach” villagers. The understanding was that their main work would lie in the villages (attended as Hyderabad already was by other mission and church organizations), that the



John H. and Maria Epp Voth and children. (CMBS Fresno)

work on their compounds would fade in significance as churches in the villages grew into maturity (the mission station as a starting point and not the goal). Missionary J.H. Voth explains some of the steps in February 1909 that eventually resulted in the selection of Deverakonda as the site of one of the conference’s mission stations like this (quoted in Peters, 1952: 182):

“Three of us missionaries met in the village Keysampett. The plan was to find a new field, a place for a new station. The Brethren Pankratz, Bergthold and I, after personal consultation and correspondence, received the conviction that the new mission station should be approximately in the center of the field we then held. Because of this Brother Pankratz, accompanied by several National evangelists, traveled south some forty miles from Malakapet, while Brother Bergthold and I traveled in an ox cart to the north about the same distance, from Nagarkurnool.

“Numerous people listened in Keysampett as well as in the even larger village Nidawel to our open-air preaching of the gospel. But we three missionaries as well as Nationals took special time for prayer, the subject of our prayer being that God would direct in a special way in the choice of the new field.

“Before we severed, however, Brother Pantratz remarked that for some time already he had been thinking about the large village of Deverakonda, and that for two reasons.

“The Brethren Friesen and Unrub of the Mennonite Brethren of Russia had drawn his attention to the village and the district and had informed him of their readiness to transfer that section to the American Mennonite Brethren Mission, due to the large size of their own field.

“And, again, Deverakonda seemed to be the center of a very large and prosperous district with a fair number of Christians already.”

chances for study, reflection, retreat, language learning, family life and a kind of manageability that would not have been theirs otherwise.

Meanwhile, many unsupported converts needed support and a place to which to escape. As one of the MB missionaries once pointed out, “To become a Christian and live on in *some* of the villages meant a living death.” It had to do with the possibility of being cut off from water, food supplies, earning opportunities and the chance to arrange marriages for one’s children. It had to do with the possibility of complete social ostracism.

Third, the system of patronage between leaders and followers in a setting like this in the early years of the twentieth century encouraged the independent demonstration of power and recourse. And this proved possible out of the mission station setting. The missionaries had an access to power that enabled them to set up and conduct their programs without major opposition. Theirs were certain privileges under the colonial system and in the ties that often proved possible with local leaders.

Fourth, the mission setting was in many ways strange and difficult for the early missionaries. Many Europeans still wore flannel “belts” for protection against cholera and pith helmets for protection against the noonday sun. Tigers, leopards, hyenas and *jinkas* (small deer) could be found in the forests. Plague, smallpox, cholera and other diseases at times took on epidemic proportions. Famine had periodically stalked the land through the late 1800s and still threatened in many areas.

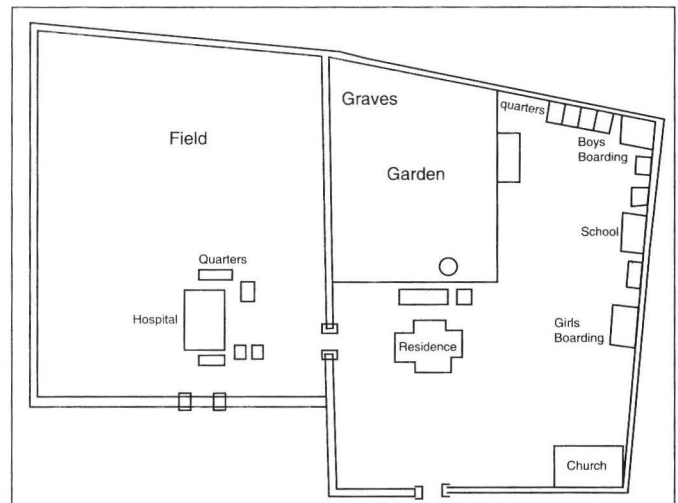
Finally, ideologies of the time often encouraged the missionaries to believe that local institutions were in decay and that the patterns they were helping to introduce would someday sweep the land. The missionaries frequently referred to the local people as heathen, sometimes

The Nagarkurnool mission bungalow shortly after construction in 1908. (EA)





Pushing and pulling the new windmill into place in Nagarkurnool (unfortunately over a well that never yielded much water). (CMBS Fresno)

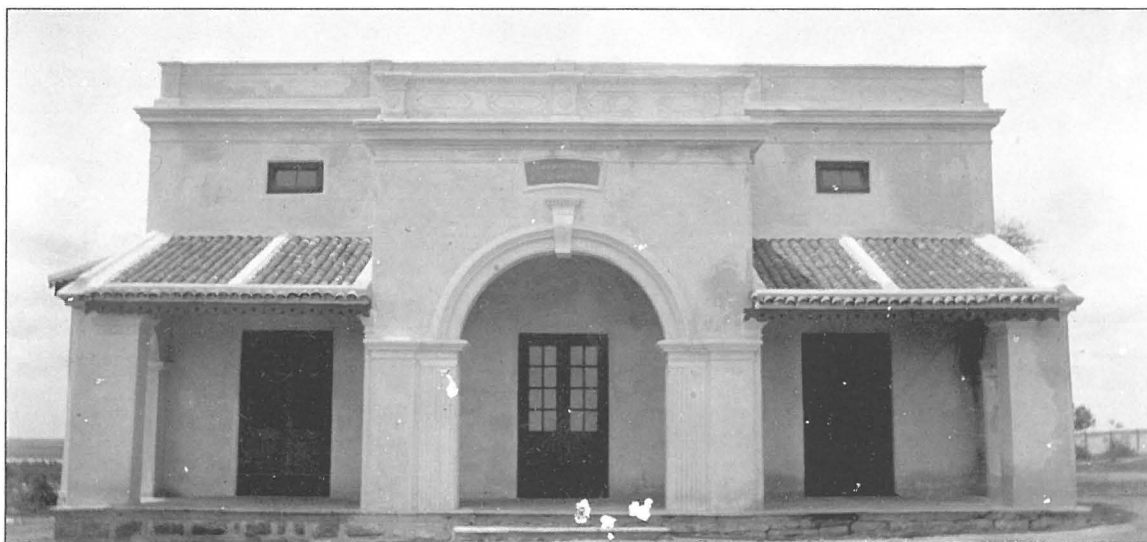


The general layout of the Nagarkurnool mission compound, 1945.



Staff quarters towards the back of the Nagarkurnool mission compound. (CMBS Fresno)

The hospital building on the Nagarkurnool mission compound shortly after construction. (CMBS Fresno)



The medicine shelves in the dispensary of the Nagarkurnool hospital, about 1930. (CMBS Fresno)



The Nagarkurnool mission bungalow, about 1943. (CMBS Fresno)



with all the pejorative content such labeling could entail. Many of the social scientists of the day, with just as much of an ethnocentric orientation to the world, labeled the local people animists, superstitious, primitive, uncivilized, backward or underdeveloped, in acceptance of approaches then popular. Few westerners of any description at the time failed to feel they had much more to offer than to learn. Their assumptions in general were that their own already industrialized countries had already achieved a level of development countries like India could only hope someday to achieve, that progress meant development along the lines, or in relation to the stages, already accomplished by “more developed” countries.

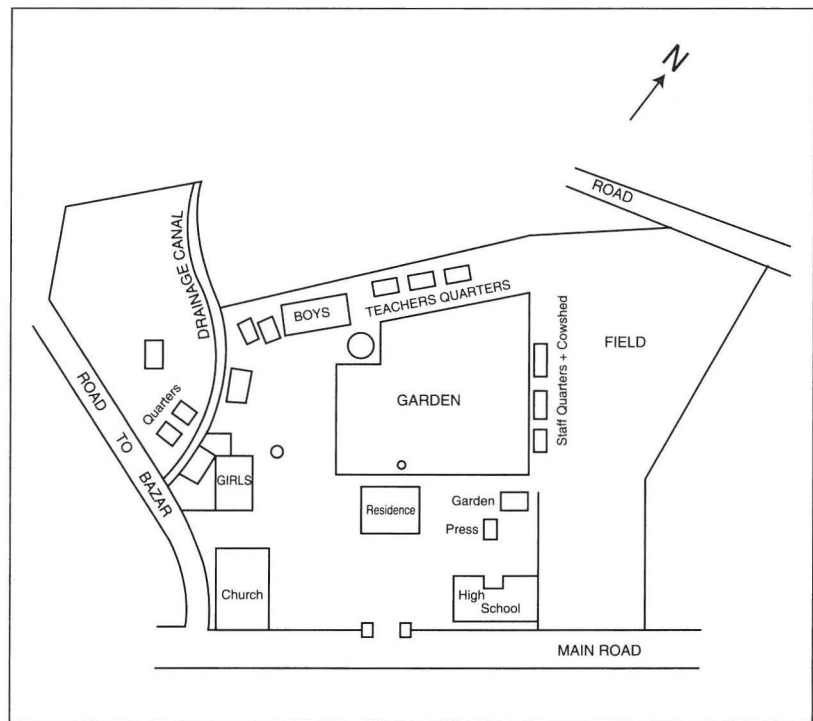
The North American MBs first worked out of Malakapet. The first urban and rural mission stations they established on their own were respectively in Hughestown and Nagarkurnool. By the 1920s, they had also established mission programs on and out of their mission stations in Deverakonda, Wanaparthy and Shamshabad. In the 1930s, they added a mission compound in Kalvakurty and took over the mission stations already established by the Baptists in Mahbubnagar and Gadwal. They added their Makthal/Narayanper field in 1953 at which time “independent” missionary Charles Billington transferred his work to their supervision.

Compounds included the residences of the missionaries and a church. All of them, at least eventually, included educational programs. Early on Deverakonda and Shamshabad offered medical and health services in their areas. The India MB conference’s hospital services were eventually centered in Wanaparthy and Jadcherla. The conference’s printing press and Bible College, first established by missionary Daniel Berghold in Nagarkurnool, were later transferred, respectively, to Mahbubnagar and Shamshabad.

The mission compounds were the centers of the many institutional programs organized by the missionaries. All along they were also the centers from which extension work into their hinterlands was organized.

Students on their way from their boarding to classes on the Mahbubnagar mission compound, 1955. (CMBS Fresno)





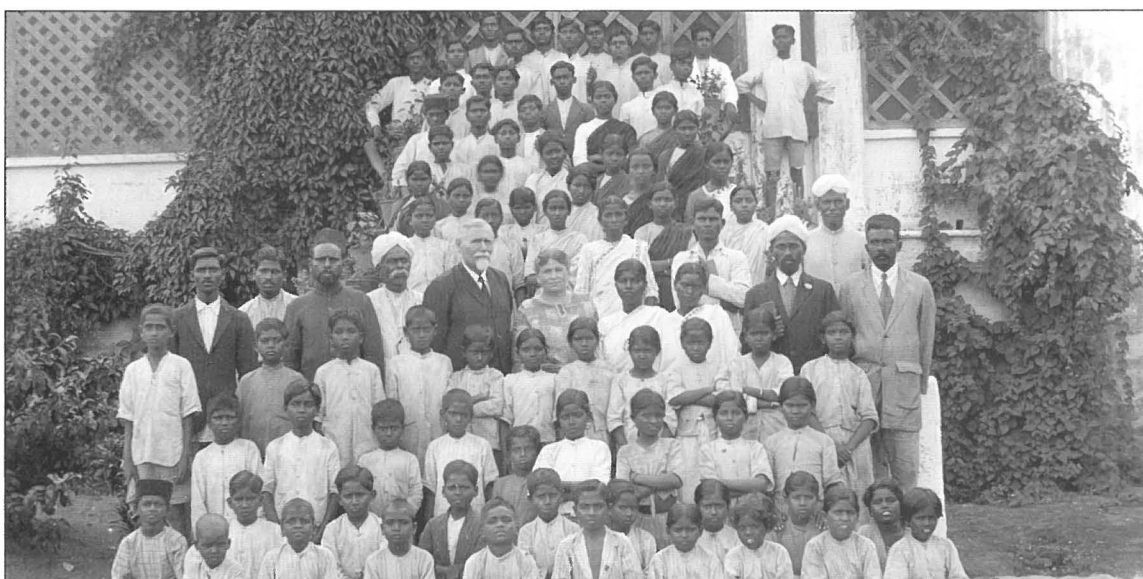
The general layout of the Mabbubnagar mission compound, 1945.



Students lining up before the start of their school day on the Mabbubnagar compound, their school building in the background, 1955. (CMBS Fresno)



The pastor's residence cum high school boys boarding on the Mabbubnagar mission compound, about 1945. (CMBS Fresno)



Boarding school students with missionaries John H. and Maria Pankratz on the Hughestown compound, about 1924. (CMBS Fresno)



Wards and the one side of the hospital on the Wanaparathi mission compound, 1950s. (CMBS Fresno)



Missionaries A. A. Unruh (holding the reins) and P. V. Balzer ready to leave the Gadwal mission compound for the town of Gadwal, some three miles off, about 1940. (CMBS Fresno)



One of the bungalows for missionaries on the Shamshabad mission compound, 1932. (CMBS Fresno)

The Starting Point, not the Goal

"Of necessity the work of the mission is concentrated on the mission station. Here live the missionaries, and here we establish our schools and hospitals. The main work, however, is in the villages that surround the station. The mission station is but the starting point and not the goal. It will disappear as soon as the missionary withdraws or is compelled to withdraw. Our purpose, therefore, is not to build up strong stations, but to develop strong churches in the villages. In order to accomplish this, tours into the villages are absolutely necessary and form an important part of our work."

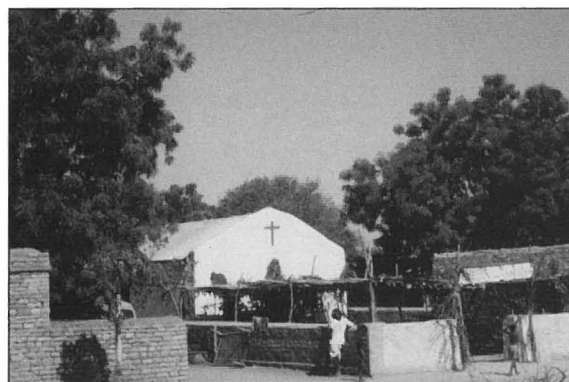
"If we take Wanaparty station as an explanatory illustration, we find that this station is surrounded by over 300 villages. All these villages are to be reached from this station. In thirty-one of the villages National workers have been stationed. In fifty-three villages live Christians. That means that in this field there are yet over 250 villages where neither Christians nor a minister are to be found. And in that part of the field that constitutes the Kohlapur kingdom (samasthan), and which numbers 120 villages, only five villages can be found with Christians and only one village with a stationed minister. Our aim is not to erect a large mission station in Wanaparty, but to reach these 300 villages."

"If we look at the necessity of the tours in the villages, we are reminded first of all of the commission of the Lord: 'Go ye and preach the gospel to every creature.' It is our obligation to preach the gospel unto all, even to them in the most distant villages. We have not only the commission of the Lord, but also His example. One day he said unto His disciples: 'Let us go into the neighboring villages ...' "

With their institutions and what they and their institutions came to represent and enable in terms of value, position and influence, the mission stations or compounds of the MBs, like the compounds of almost all other mission organizations in India, rather than "disappearing" eventually became of great interest in and of themselves, at times to much consternation and much reason for consternation. They served, however, as the bases from which the missionaries worked in their different "field" areas, and most effectively at that. The paragraphs quoted above (as reproduced in Peters, 1952: 192) were written by missionary J. N. C. Hiebert in 1936.



"Starting point (Wanaparthu) ...



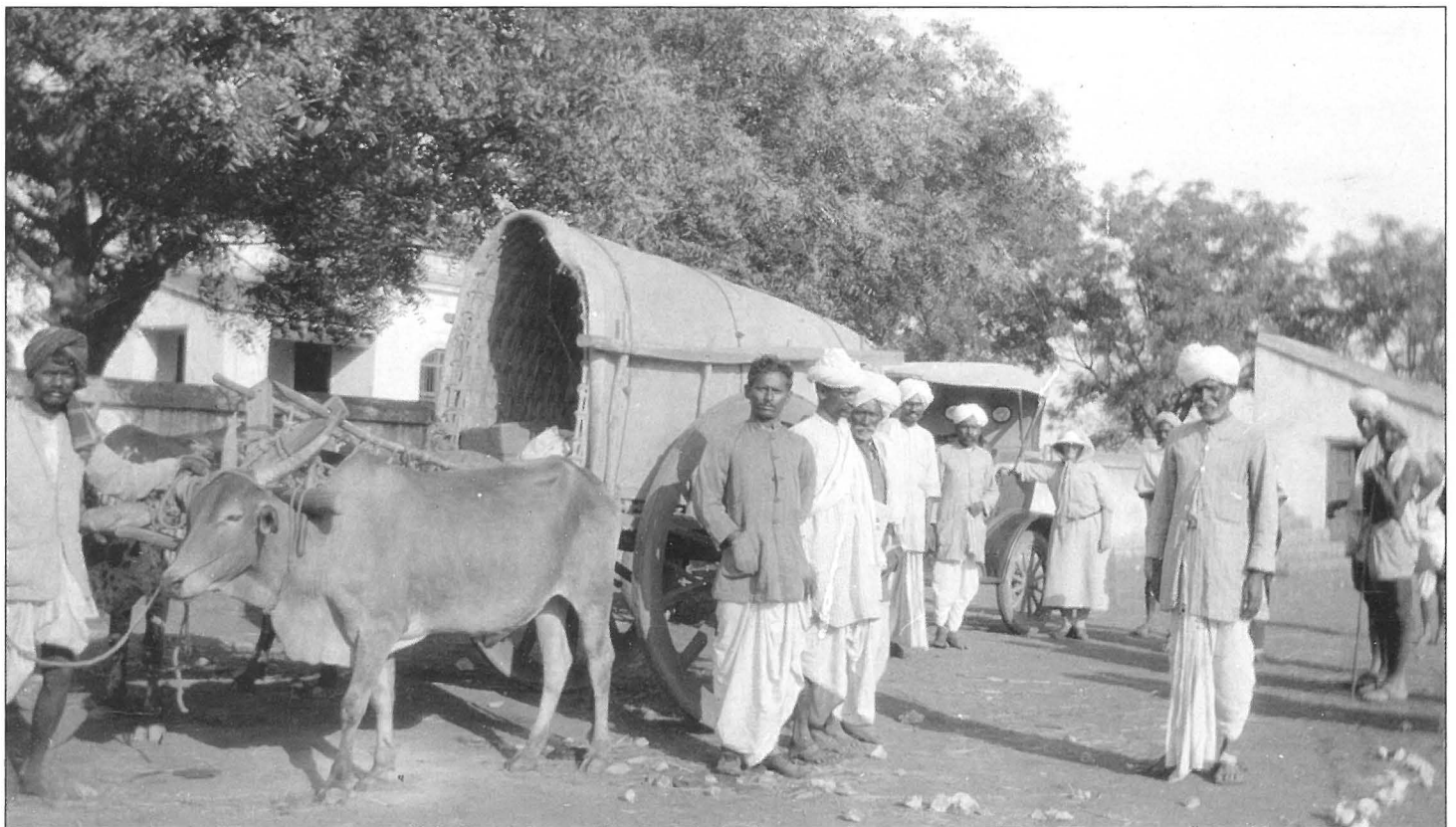
... and goal" (Chinnachintakunta)

Touring

The work out from the compounds included touring. In the early days missionaries and their coworkers went out in ox *bundies* or horse *tongas* to set up tent camps under mango or *chintakai* (tamarind) trees near the villages they were visiting. By the 1930s, they had started using trailers, sometimes sending them ahead pulled by oxen, after World War II more and more commonly pulling them behind their motor vehicles.

Village rounds on tours were roughly similar: welcomes by local people, the setting up of camp, visits to village leaders, conversations, listening to petitions and responding as possible, the lancing of boils and the application of salves, the distribution of medical supplies to the needy, encouragements to those with serious ailments to visit hospitals, visits to homes, the lighting of pressure lanterns, evening gatherings in one or another village square, singing and preaching. Camps lasted two to three days at a time. They almost always

Arriving in a village to hold a medical camp, the early years. (CMBS Fresno)



included visits to other nearby villages as well. The attempt of the missionaries was to visit at least several villages in each of the general areas of the larger “fields” for which they were responsible each year. Some of the missionaries liked to tour. Others didn’t.

Field associations of ministers were formed as quickly as possible. From the beginning it was understood by the missionaries that while their encouragement and backing would be important, it would be the work of local believers, not theirs, that would be vital in the growth of the church. By the middle 1950s, overnight missionary tours to villages became less and less common as motor vehicles and improved roads made round trips during a single day increasingly attractive, as local congregations and traveling local evangelists took over more and more of the work involved in village outreach and as the active involvement of non-Indians in evangelism was more and more readily regarded negatively, and opposed, by non-Christians.

Most of the children of the MB missionaries greatly enjoyed touring: welcoming villagers; climbs up rock strewn hills, sometimes to ancient and now completely abandoned forts; swims with village youngsters in streams and rivers and village ponds and wells; the sites and sounds of village life; village herds with their bells, and herders making their dusty way out of their village pens in the mornings, back at dusk; village cooked rice and curry off of stitched leaf plates while seated cross legged on *sapas* (mats) on the ground; nights under the stars.

Intricate worlds, the worlds of the villages of the MB area in those days. Worlds of light. Worlds also of shadows, some of them deep. Worlds always also of change and bright new possibilities.

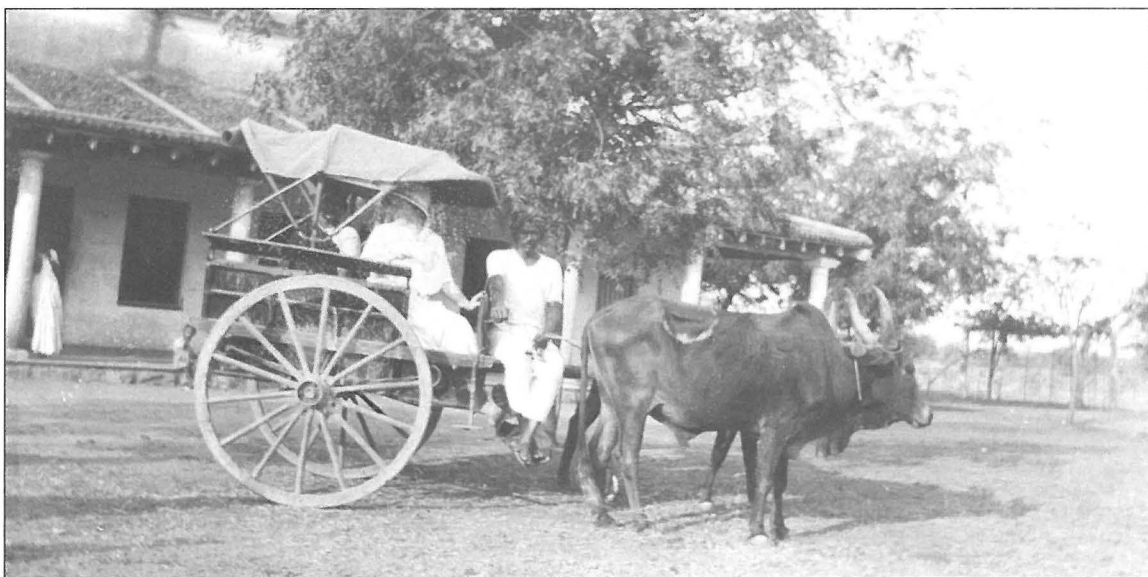
Thinking about what now might occur, the early years. (CMBF Fresno)



A conversation across cultures in an Indian village, about 1910. (FA)



Mary Walk: "Being called on a case (of illness) in a village was a frequent occurrence in Deverakonda. These oxen were fast trotters. Our urgent cases we would go high speed the first hour, about four miles, then we steadily decreased and sometimes had to stop and feed the oxen and let them rest before we reached our destination." (CMBS Fresno)

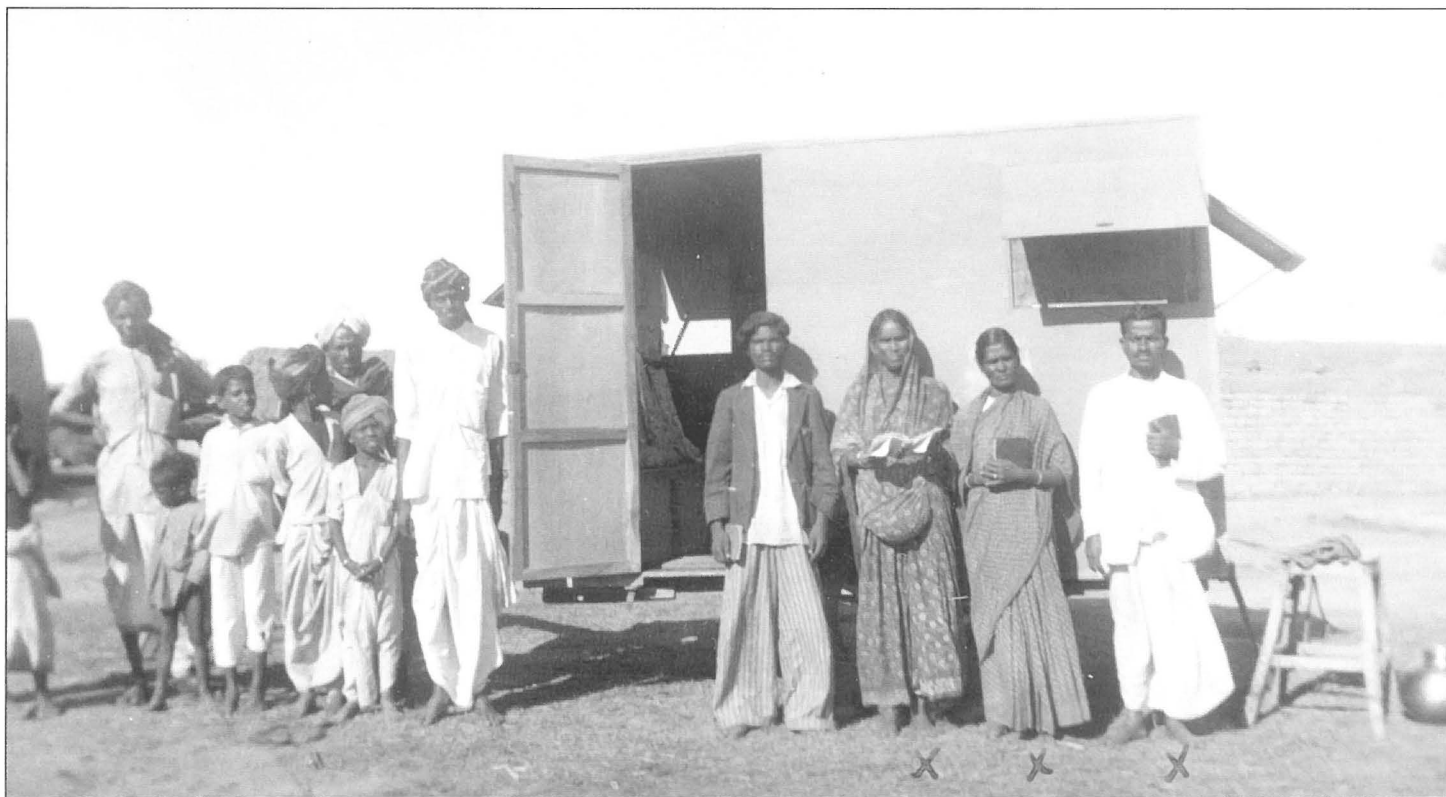


Crossing a river bed on the way to a village. (CMBS Fresno)





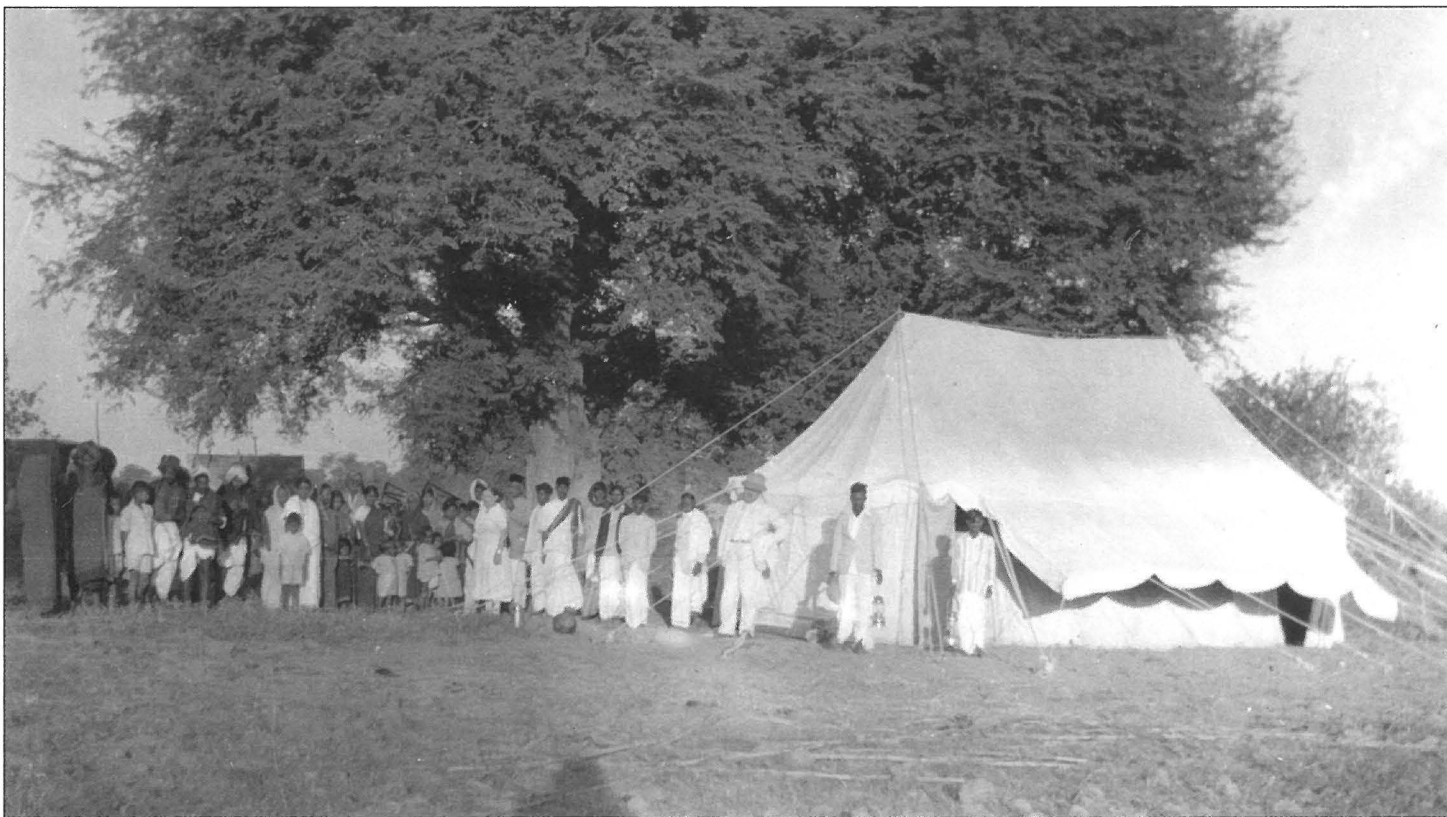
Mary Wall: "Here Chinayya, the bundy man is showing off his pair of big bullocks. They are ready to take Miss (Helen) Warkentin to (Deverakonda). These white oxen we call ours. But (they were purchased) with mission money sent to us, so they are not ours, but ours to use." (CMBS Fresno)



Anna Hanneman: "This is my trailer. A helper, two Bible women, Minnie and Ramakka, and Jonah, my preacher and cook, stand to the right. The others are villagers. We often visited this village." (CMBS Fresno)



Near a village in the Kalvakurty area. (FA)

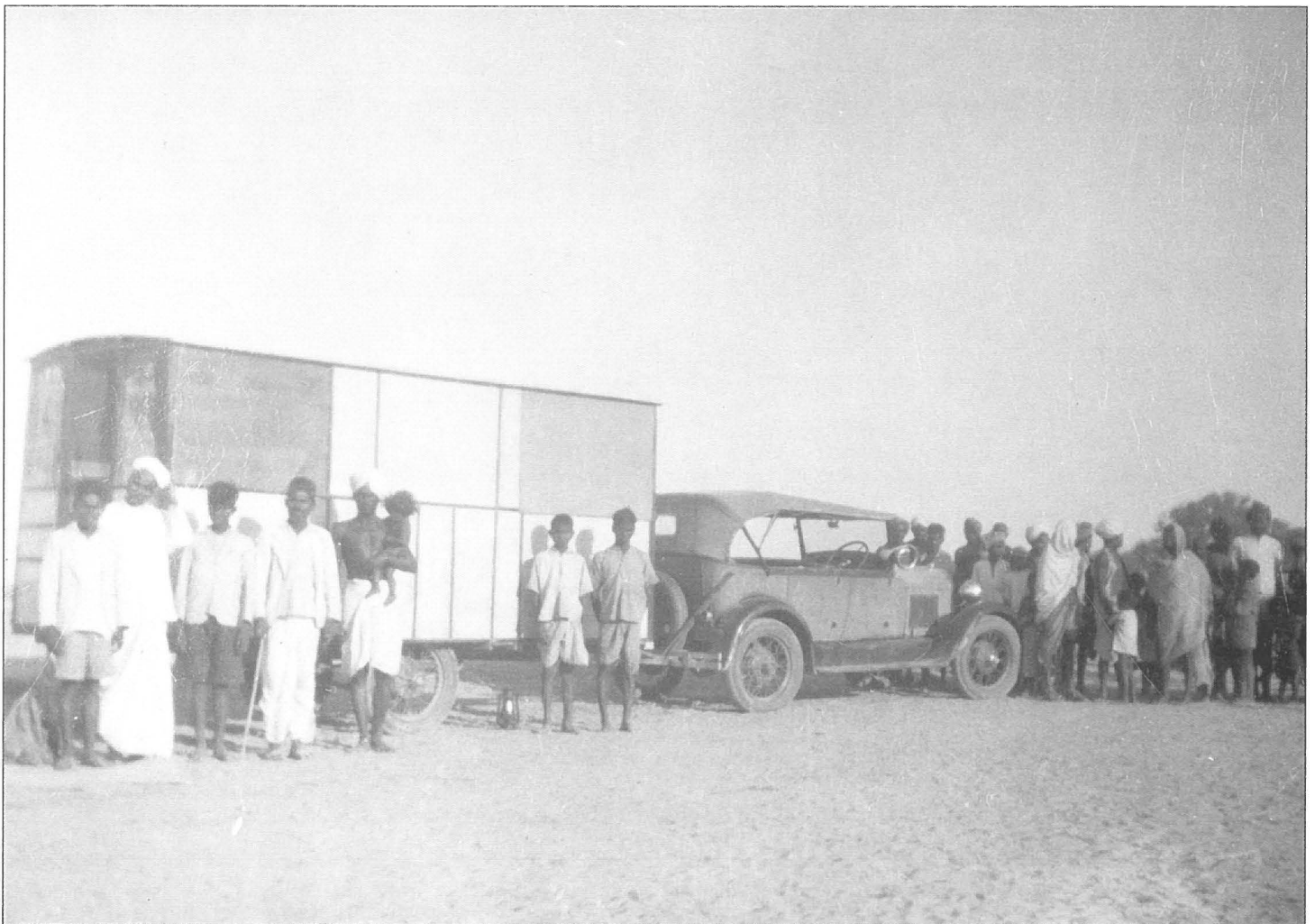


Anna Berghold: "Several times a year a Field Association is held in a certain field area. Christians and their families from about six villages come together. There are meetings for three or four days for the deepening of spiritual life. We are often greatly encouraged. This is our tent." (CMBS Fresno)



A trailer camp near a reservoir. (CMBS Fresno)

On tour near Wanaparthi, about 1942. CMBS Fresno)





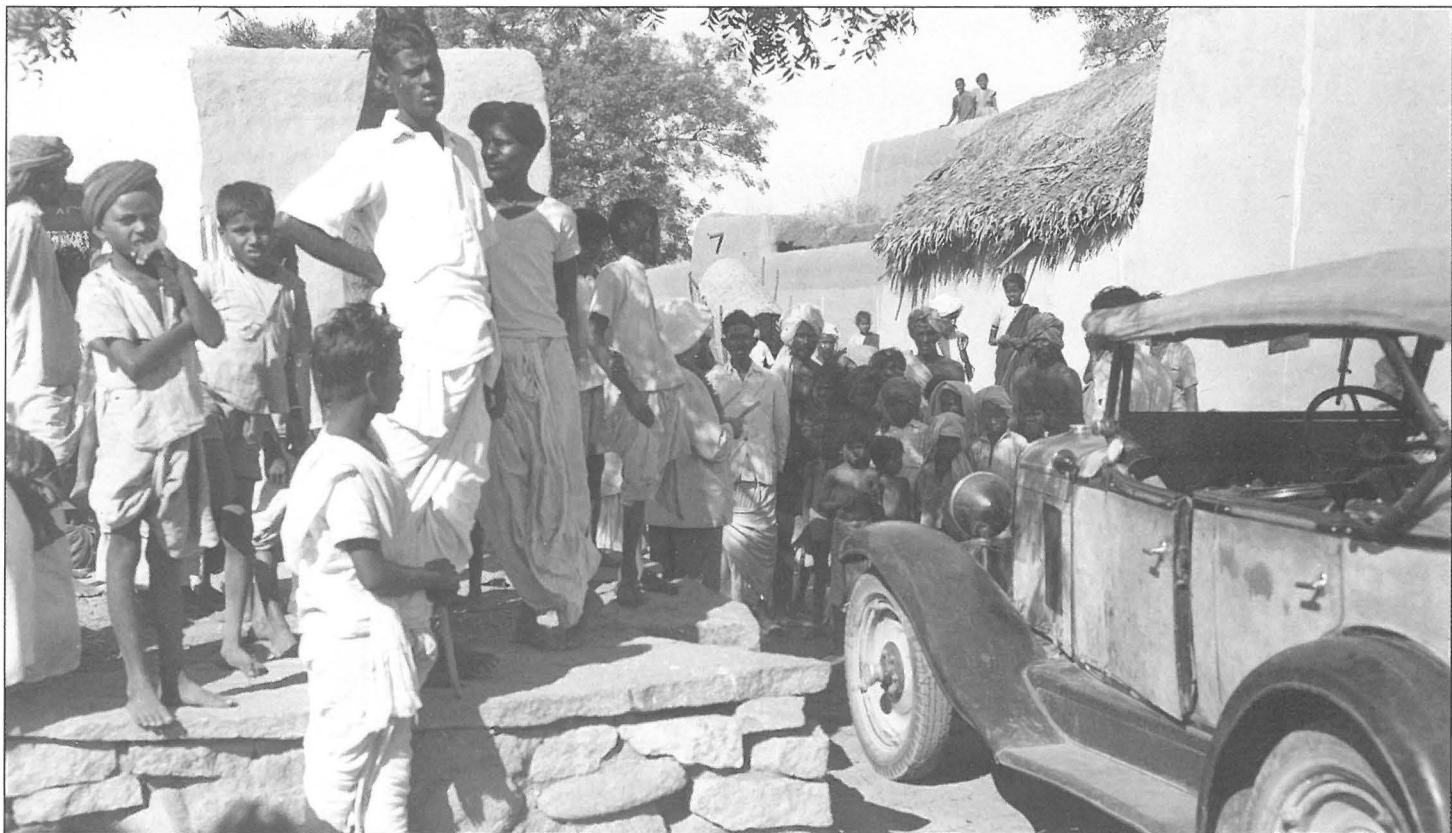
*Crossing the river near the
Gadwal mission compound,
the only way across in the
area at the time. (FA)*



Making it possible. (FA)



Abram A. and Annie Unruh in camp in the Gadwal area, middle 1950s. (CMBS Fresno)

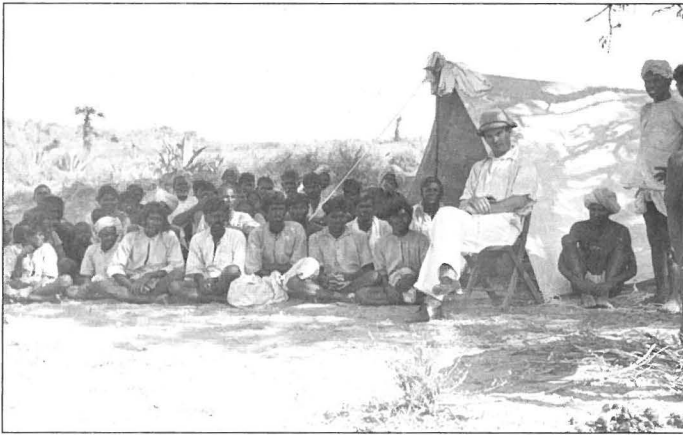


"P. V. Balzer preaching in a village near Deverakonda." (CMBS Fresno)



Missionaries J. J. Dick (standing on running board, left) and Herman Warkentin entering a village near Kalvakurty. (CMBS Fresno)

Touring in the Gadwal Area



Abram A. Unruh and friends alongside his tent. (CMBS Fresno)

Abram and Annie Unruh served as MB missionaries in India for four extended terms between the years 1936 and 1967, primarily in the then relatively isolated Gadwal and Yemmiganur areas of the MB area. Theirs was an exceptional contribution in many areas of mission service, as was the case for all long termers. Theirs was a special gift in the encouragement of village churches. What follows is an extract (adapted marginally) from a longer letter Rev. Unruh wrote

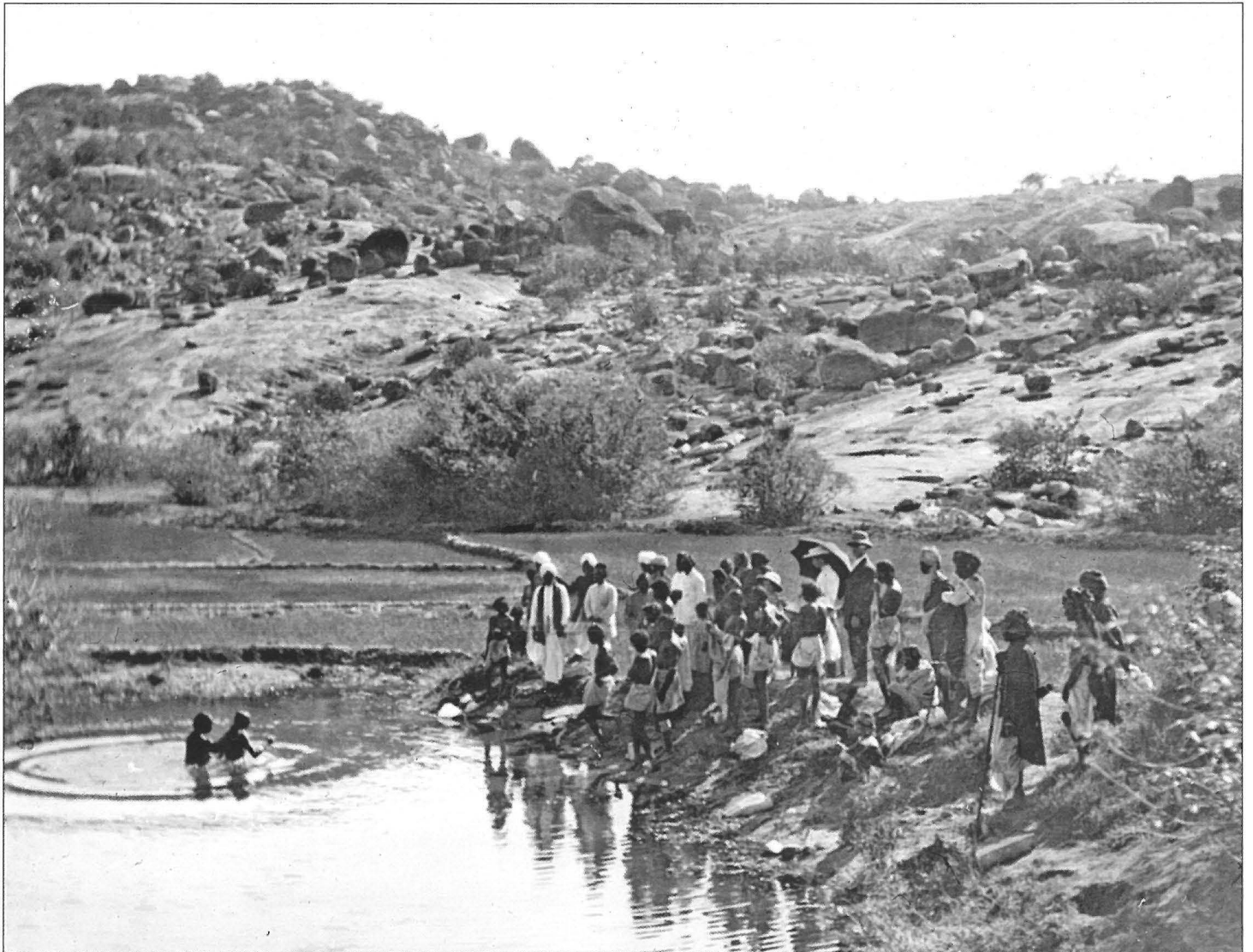
16 February 1947 to Board of Foreign Missions Executive Secretary Rev. A.E. Janzen in Kansas.

"Mrs. Unruh and I are on tour. We have crossed the Tungabhadra River with our buggy in one of the little hide covered "baskets" available for crossing and are now on the British side. There are about forty villages on this side, of which ten have Christians. This is the most promising part of our whole mission field. Here we find a spirit to go forward. In Yemmiganur we had big meetings, but as the church building was too small we had to have our meetings outside. The Yemmiganur people are badly in need of a pastor and a bigger church building. They pleaded with us. But we could promise nothing. They want to build the walls, and ask us to help them with the roof. Yesterday we were in Budoor. Many attended all meetings. Last night there we had the Lord's Supper. The whole church was together. Our meetings were in their unfinished church building. They have built with stone and lime. After finishing the walls their funds are exhausted. Now they turn to the mission for a loan of about 300 dollars to be repaid in five years so they can finish their church. We had a very blessed time with the Budoor people. When Mrs. Unruh and I left this morning in our two wheel horse cart, one of the brethren came up to me, took my hand and said, "I am so happy." Yes, they are happy, but they also have troubles. The place Nandavaram, where we are now, has one of the biggest congregations in this area. It is a "criminal village" The police inspector is afraid to take up a case in this village unless he has enough police protection along. On account of unspiritual elements the whole church was broken up a few years ago. Now more spiritual members have reorganized, and have laid down a number of rules which everyone interested has to sign before they are accepted as members. The Nandavaram people too find their new church is too small. Day after tomorrow we will be in Nagaladinne near the bank of the Tungabhadra. The congregation there is about fifty but it is a very fine group. They have no teacher or pastor but the uneducated local leaders gather the people every Sunday. They are constantly pressing for someone to lead them. We respond as we can, and are grateful for your encouragement."

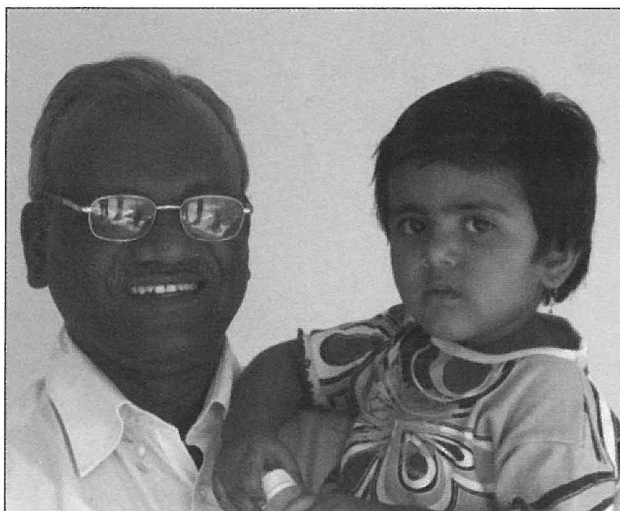
Baptism

*B*aptism into the emergent church of Jesus Christ was what the missionaries and their coworkers sought to promote from the beginning. In the first couple decades missionaries were frequently involved in the baptism of new believers. But, by the 1930s, most baptisms were conducted by Indian leaders and, by the late 1940s, all but an occasional baptism was.

Baptism in a village pond in the Nagarkurnool area in the early years. (FA)



How a Piece of Paper could Speak from Such a Long Distance



Dr. E.D. Solomon and his granddaughter Mini, 2009. (EA)

Rev. Dr. Etala D. Solomon is one of the leading educators among the MBs in India and is Vice Principal at MB Centenary Bible College in Shamshabad. He wrote this about his father's experience in joining the church and ministry.

"My father Rev. Etala T. David was named Hanmanna by his Dalit parents. He was born in Bekkarpalli, a remote village in Mabbubnagar District. His father Tippanna died when he was three months old. He and his older sister Balamma were reared by their widowed mother.

"How my father was led to the Lord is an interesting story. He was curious about a post card written by one of his relatives in Sholapur in the state of Maharashtra. His illiterate relatives took the letter to the Karnam, the village revenue officer, to read. Sitting on a high platform, the Karnam read their post card for them. My father wondered how a piece of paper could speak from such a long distance, and decided to learn about its power.

"During those days K. T. Mark Pantulu, a Christian preacher used to visit my father's village and teach people how to read and write on "sand platforms" in a cow shed late in the evenings. My father gave himself to study and, at the same time, listened carefully to Mark Puntulu's instruction and preaching. After a few month's of listening to God's word, my father was convicted of his sinful nature and accepted the Lord Jesus as his personal savior. He was baptized by Mr. Yobannaiah at Makthal.

"Gradually my father felt God's call for fulltime ministry. Though he had thirteen acres of land and his widowed mother and other relatives scolded him tooth and nail to prevent him from joining the ministry, he would not give up his high calling. Eventually he became established as a preacher in the Makthal-Narayanpet Field Association. He served the Lord faithfully until his death in 1999.

"My father Rev. Etala T. David founded MB churches in the villages of Lankala, Bekkarpally, Yamke, Anugonda and Manthangod, and encouraged many to come up in life. Several of the high caste people he taught how to read and write called him their guru. My father's many disciples remain active in God's service.

"My father Rev. Etala T. David and his wife my mother Suvarnamma David worked hard for the Lord. My brothers and sisters and I and our families praise God for their lives and ministry."

Baptism in an ouzu (well holding tank) in the Nalgonda area in the early days, the missionary shielded from the sun by a topee (pith helmet). The "tropical sun" was generally perceived to be "dangerous" to the health of light complexioned people through the early days of missionary activity in India, and certainly often excessively so. Yet the attendant concern was frequently not unimportant. Access to shelter from the sun in those days was not nearly as accessible as it has since become for those who routinely ventured out at all times of the day, as did the missionaries, especially in village areas.

(CMBS Fresno)



Esther, Irene, Ruth and John Wiebe (l-r) being baptized in the Krishna River by their grandfather Daniel Bergthold, their father John and Pastor M. S. Paul (of Amarachinta, dark coat) assisting.

(CMBS Fresno)



A Shepherd boy heard the Call of the Heavenly Shepherd

Jakkula L. David is Executive Director of the MB Development Organization. He and his wife, Premilla, live in Nagarkurnool. He wrote the following paragraphs (adapted here) about how his parents Jakkula Lingaiah and Mallamma came to join the church, under the title above, in 1904 (Purushotham, 1904: 85):



Jakkula Lingaiah and Mallamma

"My father Jakkula Lingaiah, a shepherd, hailed from the small village Chedurpally near Kalwakurthy. His parents depended on farming and sheep rearing for their living. Like his parents and brothers and sisters, he was illiterate. Instead of a shirt, he wore a gongadi (sheep wool blanket) around his shoulders.

"In about the year 1932 while watching his family's sheep one night my father saw a type of lightning in the sky he had never seen before. Usually lightning appears 'jig jag.' This lightning appeared like a cross. When he asked village priests about what he had seen, they couldn't explain it.

"My father kept asking, asking also about the beauty of creation and about the creator. Years passed. Still he did not get answers that satisfied him.

"Then one fine day, while my father was working on his land, a stranger on his way to another village stopped to eat his lunch nearby. When my father asked him who he was, the man replied that his name was Abraham and that he was an evangelist going about telling whoever would listen about the good news of Jesus Christ. When my father next asked him about the lightning he had seen, and about creation, Abraham explained all about God and creation, about the birth of Jesus, about the shepherds and the star they had seen, about the crucifixion of Jesus, about the cross of Calvary and about Jesus' resurrection, all to my father's deep satisfaction. And soon thereafter, now at peace in his questioning, my father repented of his sins, accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior and received baptism.

"My father's own people and in-laws persecuted him for this. For some time they did not even allow him to draw water from the well he himself had dug. They now also wanted his wife, my mother, to leave him. But she wouldn't, and, after fifteen years, she too accepted Jesus Christ as her savior and Lord.

"My parents eventually had five daughters and three sons. Neither all of them nor all of their children have become Christians. Pray for them.

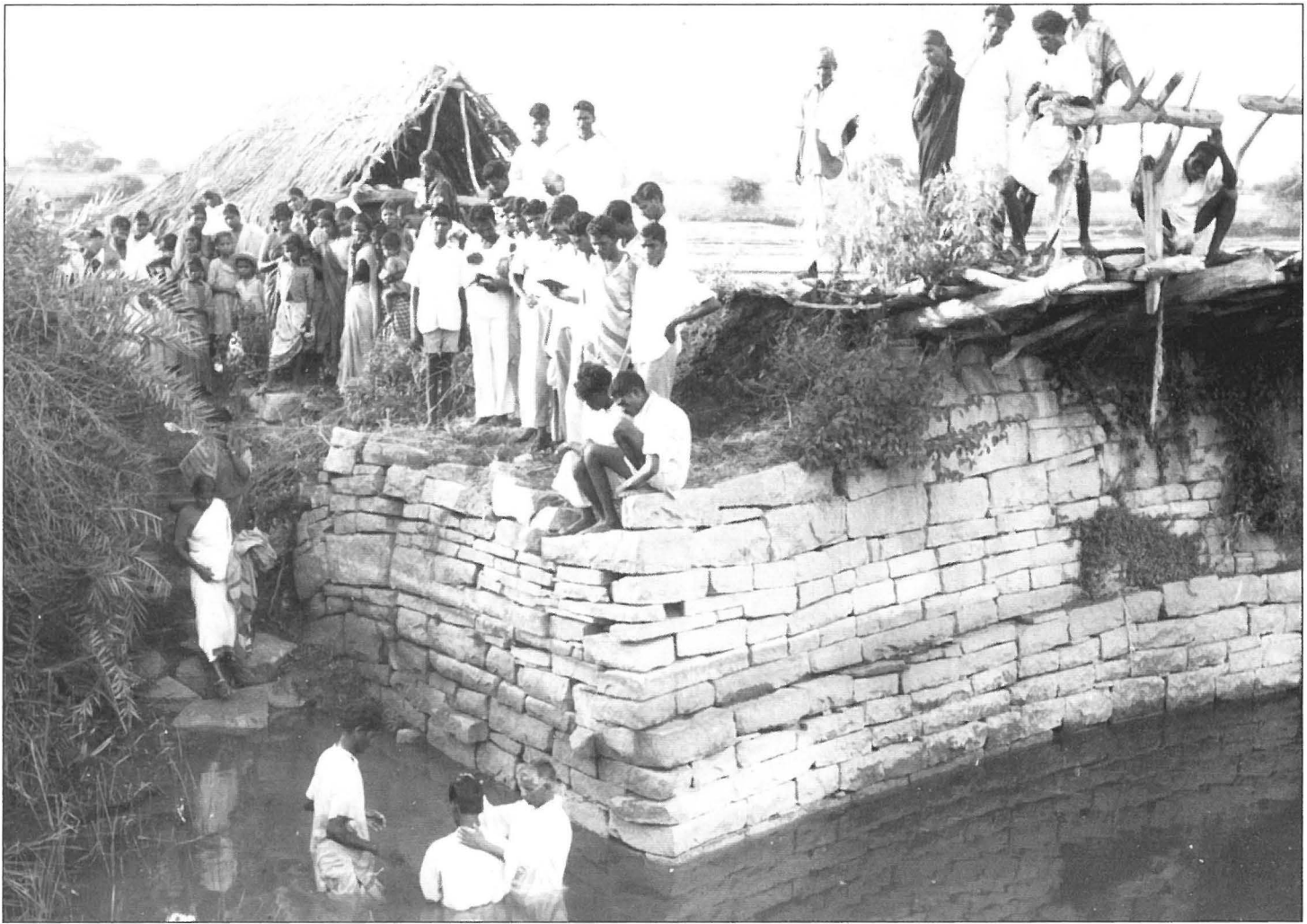
"My parents constructed a church in Chedurpalli with their own money in 1959, and for many years supported the pastor there. Their favorite Bible verses were Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 4:12 and Romans 10:13. My father died in 1978, my mother in 2000."

Of differences in countless ways, yet of one "body" in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Yes indeed, the twain, East and West, can meet. (CMBS Fresno)



Village men ready for baptism. (EA)





*Baptism in a village well
in Amrabad, 1964.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*Baptism in the ocean into
the Mount Zion MB
Church, Mumbai, early
1970s. (CMBS Fresno)*

10

Churches

*I*t is easy to chuckle, even to scoff, when looking at some of the pictures in our preceding sections of the meeting of the MB missionaries and their families with the good people of the Nizam's Dominions. For very good reason. The contrasts between interpretations of the world, meanings in life, political and economic supports and technological wherewithal were dramatic. So were understandings of possibilities:

"On the other hand, the missionaries out of their Anabaptist Dutch German, now evangelical, background, in their bungalows and dresses and suits and ties and dinner tables and language and cultural learning, doing what they needed to do to remember who they were and why they had come;

On the other, the people of the Deccan in their intricate and well established, feudally outlined, at the same time agriculturally rooted, rounds of life.

The church at Malakapet, early on: (CMBS Fresno)



But to step beyond simple minded reactions to what was underway is to recognize that whatever the superficialities in difference, underneath, the attempt, in the grace of God, was to build a common humanity: one faith, one baptism, one church in which all who joined would worship together as equals.

Dazzling the innocence in this!

Dazzling also the vision! One “body” with membership around the world, its members interested together in doing justice, walking humbly, encouraging mercy and being of service?

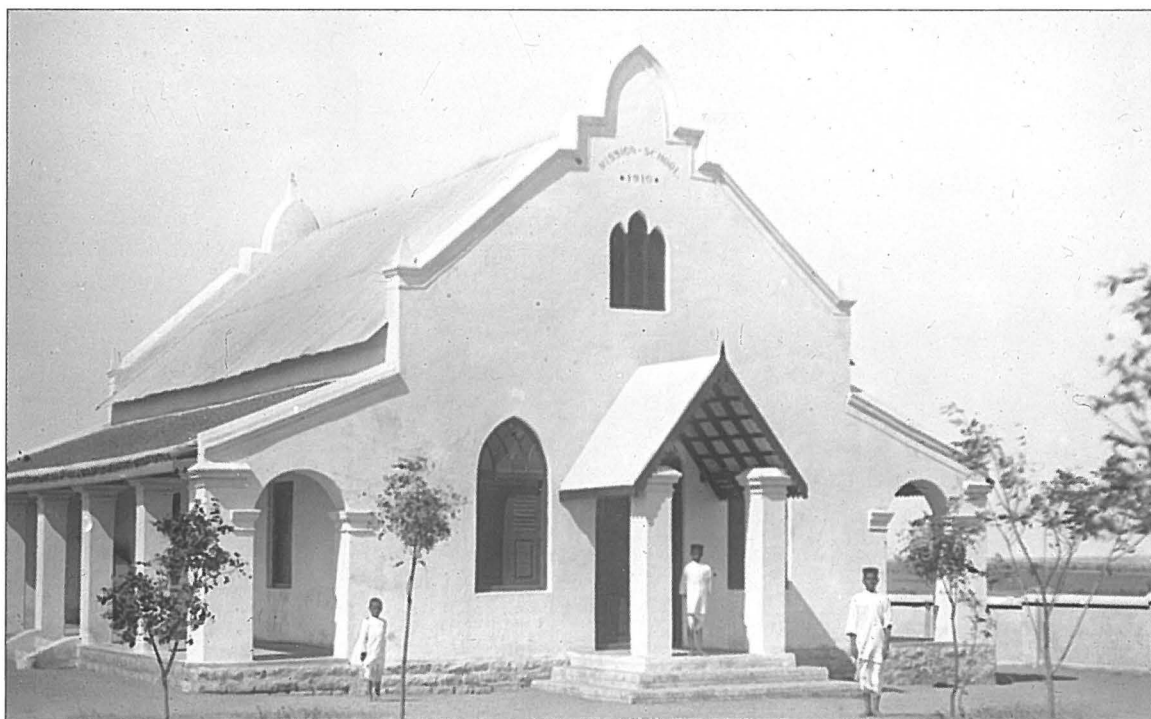
Now the church the missionaries and their coworkers were instrumental in bringing into existence in the Nizam’s Dominions was no better at accomplishing what it was set up to do than the church, or for that matter other bodies, anywhere else. But towards just such accomplishment it set out, in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many individuals suffered much in the decision to become Christian. Some were driven from their villages. Many were beaten or otherwise publicly humiliated. Some saw their houses burned. Many were refused access to village wells or cut off from the social, occupational and other ties that had bound them and their families into village rounds of life for generations. When twenty-seven Dalits professed Christianity in a small village near Kalvakurty in the early 1950s, for instance, village elders had them beaten and trampled, then forced to drink *kallu* to the point of drunkenness, to the effect only one of them a year later was publicly willing to profess Christianity.

Overall, however, the *movement* towards Christianity in the MB church area was never accompanied by particularly much general violence or other overtly negative reaction. The political systems of the Nizams and the British through the early decades of the twentieth century rendered such unlikely. This area was anyway a backwater in terms of the principal developments of Indian civilization. Confrontations between Hindus and Muslims at the time were far more dangerous and much more likely than confrontations with Christians to flare out of control. Finally, as recruitment to the church in the area tended to proceed along the lines of some of the groupings within the system, not to their dismantling, it wasn’t in the beginning as challenging to social order as otherwise it might have been.

The percentages Christian in the population of the MB church area according to Census of India counts in 1931 and 1961 — which, given opposition to joining the church under the predominance of Hindu definitions here, were no doubt low — were, respectively, 0.28 and 1.1.

In a survey of the MB churches in India in 1939, missionary J. H. Lohrenz (1939: 34-35) counted fifty-six “organized churches” and thirty-four “church buildings.” The number of “churches” and “church buildings” counted in 1960 was respectively 135 and 100 (see P. Wiebe, 1988: 128-138). In their well organized and carefully conducted survey of all churches and memberships in the MB church area in 1970, Peter Hamm and V. K. Rufus counted ninety-nine “completed” church buildings, sixteen church buildings “under construction,”



The church/school on the Nagarkurnool compound, about 1920. (CMBS Fresno)



Bethany Church on the Shamshabad compound, 1932. (CMBS Fresno)

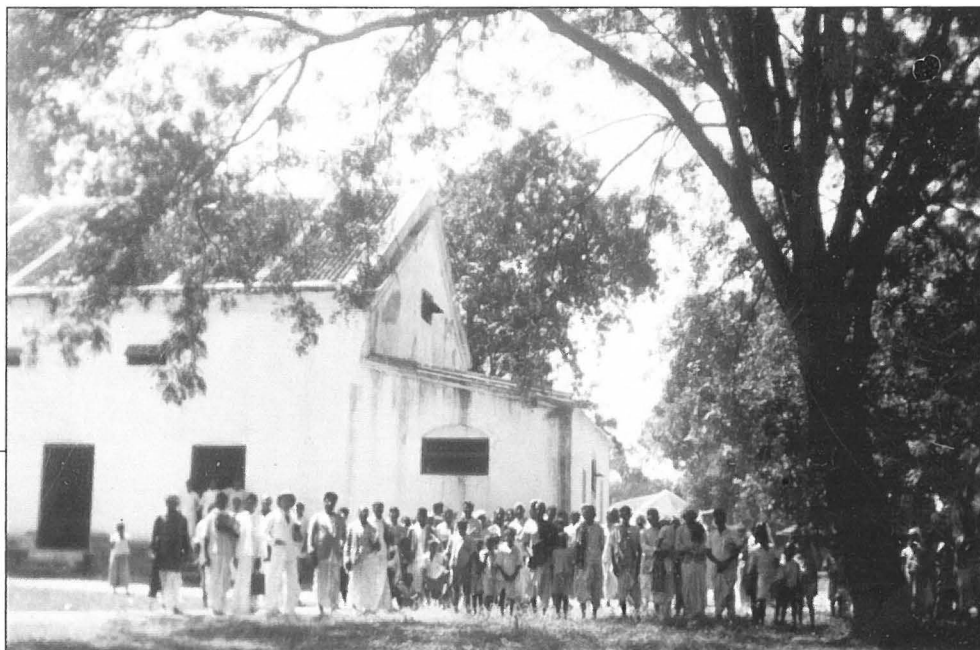
twenty-four other churches for which “foundations had already been laid.” In 1970 the two counted a total of 18,933 baptized church members.*

The overwhelming majority of those who joined the MB church in India through its mission era were laborers or small scale farmers. Almost all were very poor. All but a handful came from among the two principal subgroups among the Dalits in the area. Even in 1970 roughly 78 percent remained illiterate.

Missionaries over the centuries in India, including the missionaries of the MBs, puzzled over the best way to proselytize for the church. In the end, Christ’s message of freedom was of course most attractive to those with the least, those most broken and ground down, those at the bottom of, the social system in place.

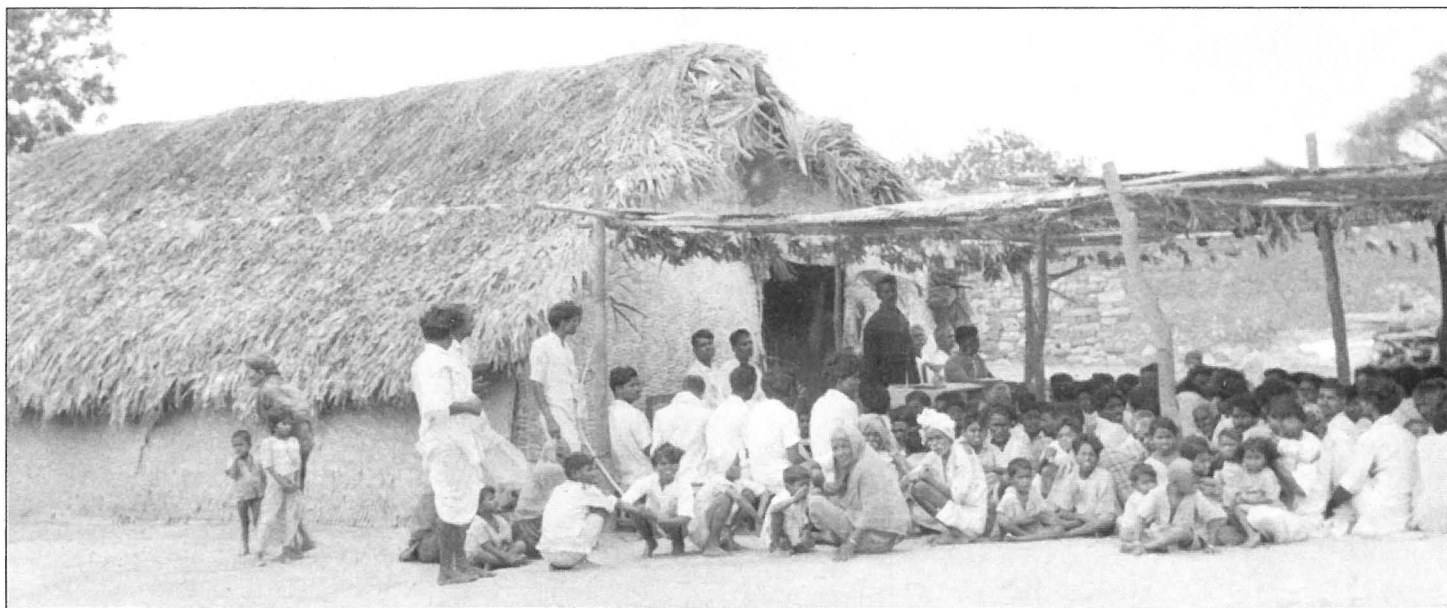
*For comparative understanding here, the Governing Council of the MB Church of India at its 50th year observances in Mahbubnagar in November 2008 reported a membership of roughly 300,000 in some 950 congregations, 500 of which had church buildings.

Calvary Church near the front gate on the Mabbubnagar compound, about 1945. (FA)



The new Calvary Church building in its new location on the Mabbubnagar compound, 1956. (CMBS Fresno)

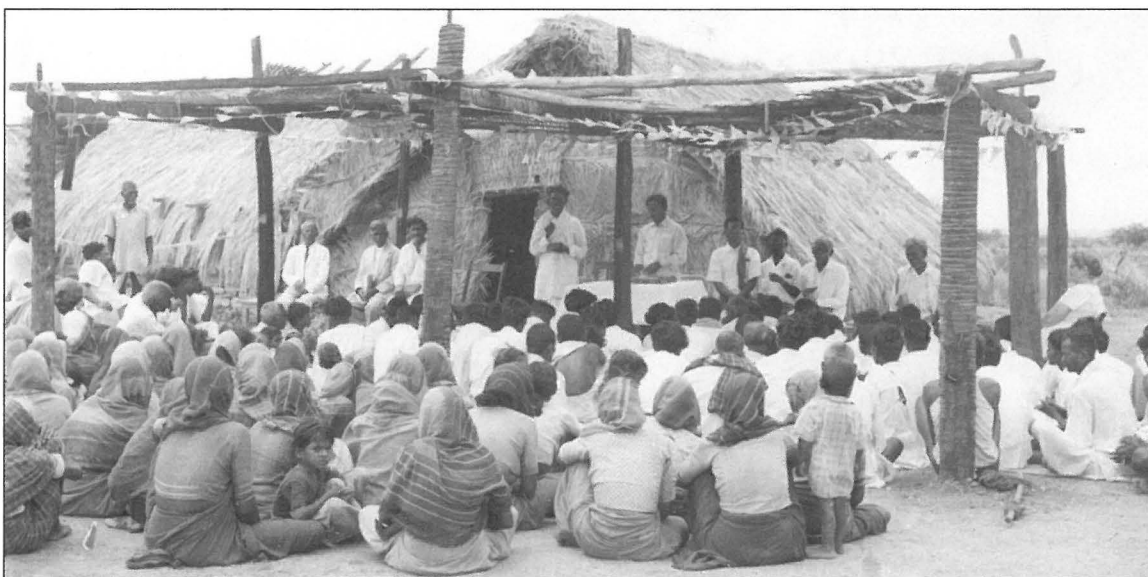
Villagers at a special meeting in front of their church building. (CMBS Fresno)



*A village church in the
Gangavathi area. (CMBS
Fresno)*



*Paul Hiebert: "Meeting of
Gadwal church pastors for
fellowship (every two
months there is such a
meeting) 14 July 1963 at
Sinclanuru, Gadwal."
(CMBS Fresno)*



*The Idj, Gadwal, church
and congregation, 1964.
(CMBS Fresno)*



A Living Church



J.N.C. and Anna Hiebert and their daughter Phyllis, 1929. (CMBS Fresno)

The MB missionaries to India lived on their compounds and responded to the needs of the people they met by building educational, medical and other institutions and programs to their advantage. These compounds, institutions and programs were in general far beyond the financial, organizational and other wherewithal of the overwhelming majority of those who joined the missionaries, and would later be at the center of many leadership struggles within the church. At the same time, paradoxically or not, they facilitated the development of the MB church in India by giving it substance, some of the “substance” of what was hoped for. All along, however, the first purpose of the missionaries was to be useful in the establishment of a church indigenous to the people

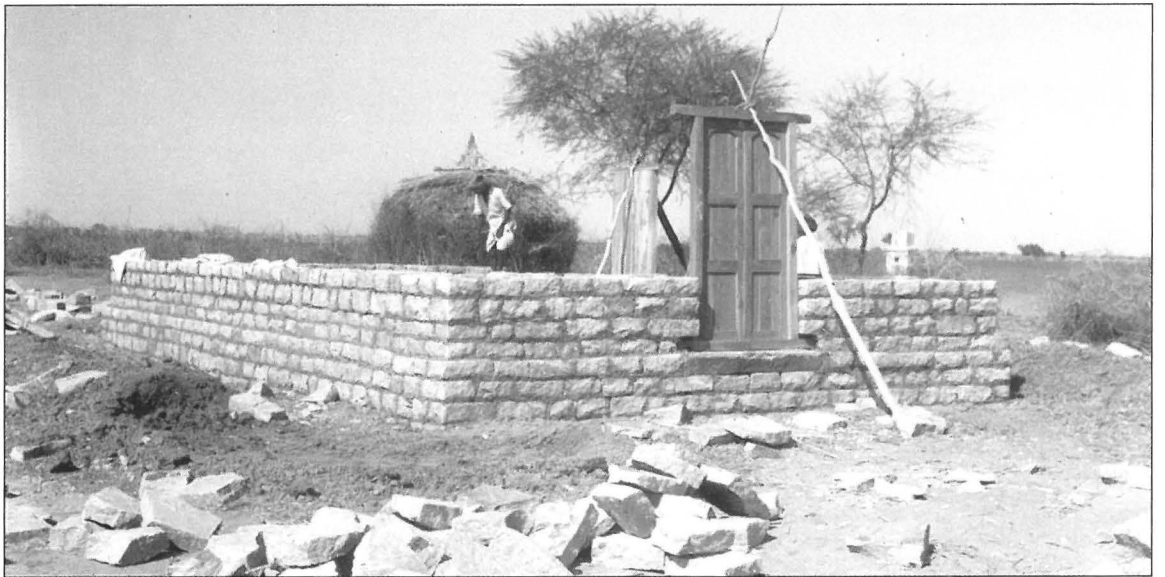
of the area in which they were now at work. In the late 1930s, missionary J. N. C. Hiebert described what he understood had been “commissioned” as follows (quoted in Peters, 1952: 194, 204):

“Christ has commissioned us to a two-fold task in connection with missionary work. We are to preach the gospel and we are to establish a functioning, living . . . native church among the Telugus which will be strong enough to stand alone.

“By a (living) church, which is our objective in missionary work, we mean a church that has taken root in native soil. Such a church must eventually be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. These three words characterize the church we have in mind. First of all, such a church must develop its own leadership. The pastors, deacons, elders and the organized local church must assume full authority and responsibility for the progress and life of the whole church. Furthermore, financial obligations must be shouldered. The organization of the church must therefore be simple enough and indigenous enough to make this possible. Finally, it is vitally important that such a church become the evangelistic agency in its own country.

“The objective of a strong indigenous church is placed before us not only out of the circumstances of our day, but also from the New Testament.

“There is necessarily much that is foreign and American that is connected with a mission supported and led by Americans. The future church, however, cannot be encumbered by this foreign element. It must be fully Indianized. It must be indigenous. . . . The future church in India must be adapted to its own people, customs and ways.”



A new church building for Chiraladoddi. (CMBS Fresno)



A new church building for Parlappally. (CMBS Fresno)



Members assisting contractors in the construction of a new church building in Chilakaladona. (CMBS Fresno)

Firm in Their Faith



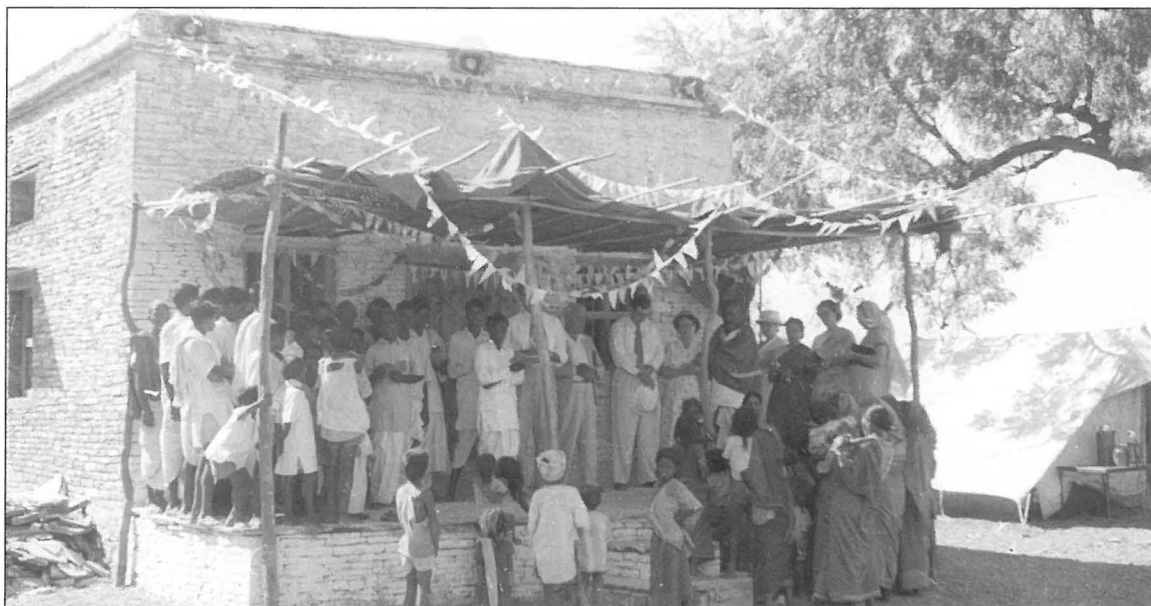
Pastor Medari B. John and Mrs. Krupamma John with their first child. (FA)

Rev. Medari Butchaiah (M. B.) John — we liked to call him Rev. Mennonite Brethren John when we were young — was pastor of the large Calvary MB Church in Mahbubnagar for twenty-six years, later pastor of the large Bethlehem MB Church in Malakapet for ten years, still later an itinerant conference minister. He was at one or another time leader in almost all of the India MB conference's activities over the years of his life (1908-2002; see Dalavai, 2003), and became the first Indian Chairman of the Conference's Governing Council (established in 1958), in 1960.

Violence against Christians in the MB area where it occurred was in general sporadic rather than sustained, localized rather than widespread. Nonetheless, its consequences for the members of the Christian community in the area were sometimes very real indeed and often, at the very least, latently threatening, as the following incident narrated by Rev. M. B. John in a letter to Board of Foreign Missions/Services Secretary Rev. Bill Wiebe 18 April 1975 helps make abundantly clear.

"Now we want to tell you about the sad incident that took place recently at the Singaram MB Church, Narayanpet. The non-Christians of that village fell upon our poor Christians and beat them, wounded them, and looted their houses and left them almost half dead. Nearly forty people were beaten likewise, young and old and women and children. The doors and windows and roof of the church and the doors of the Christian houses were broken. It was a very horrible sight, and all were admitted in the hospitals at Mahbubnagar and Narayanpet. Every thing they had for their livelihood was lost during this critical time and they have become helpless and are in a very miserable condition. . . . This has occurred just for the communal feelings. The non-Christians do not want that Christians should prosper and they wish that the Christians should be rooted off from their village. But the Christians are firm in their faith and hope, even in these troubles and temptations. We the conference as a whole took a decision to help these people by contributing our mite. We have also given this news in (our conference periodical), Suvarthamani, so that others may come to their help either in kind or coin. . . . Your help in this regard will also be very much appreciated."

Dedication services at the church in Thakaseela, 18 December 1955, congregational members and pastors in attendance. (CMBS Fresno)



Students, teachers and others in front of the church/school building on the Gadwal mission compound, about 1965. (CMBS Fresno)



A village congregation at worship on a Sunday morning. (CMBS Fresno)



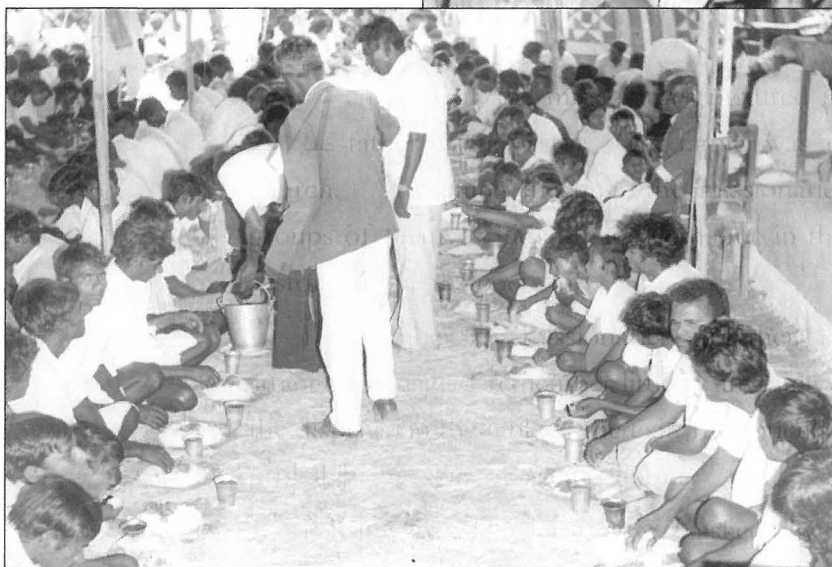


The Pedda Dhanvada church and congregation, about 1960. (CMBS Fresno)

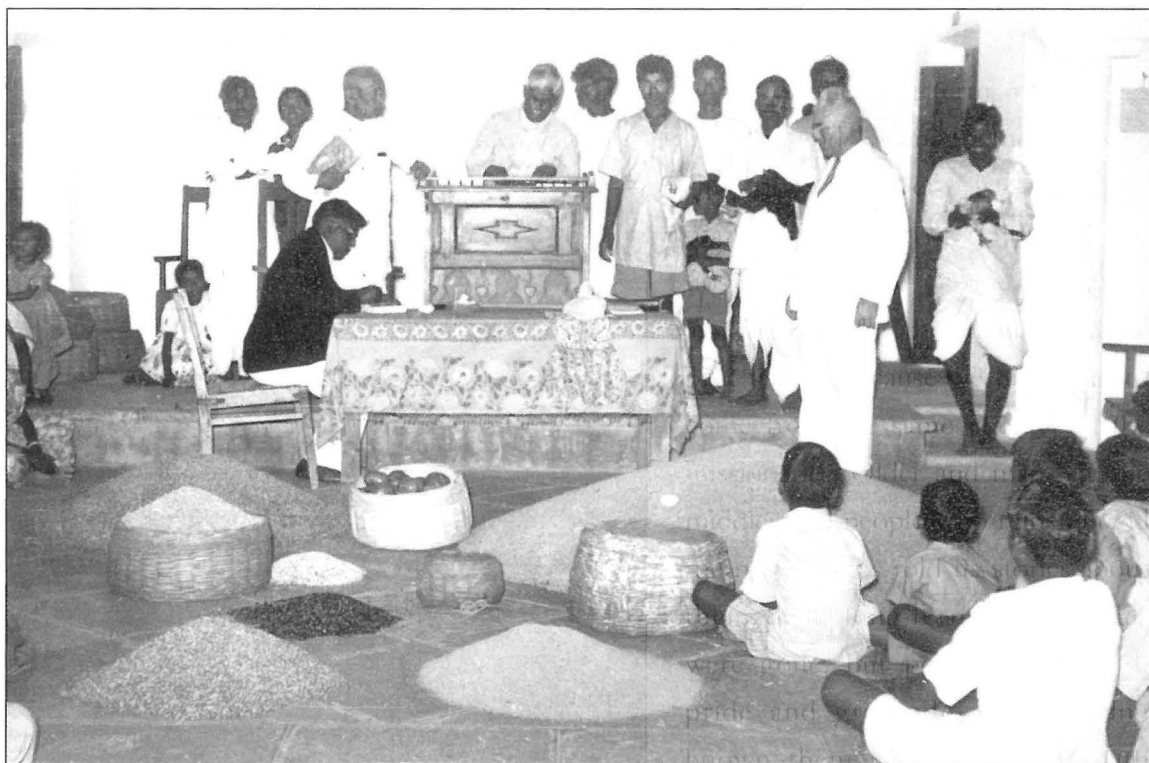


Some of the attendees at one of the conventions of the MB Church of India held during the 1950s. (CMBS Fresno)

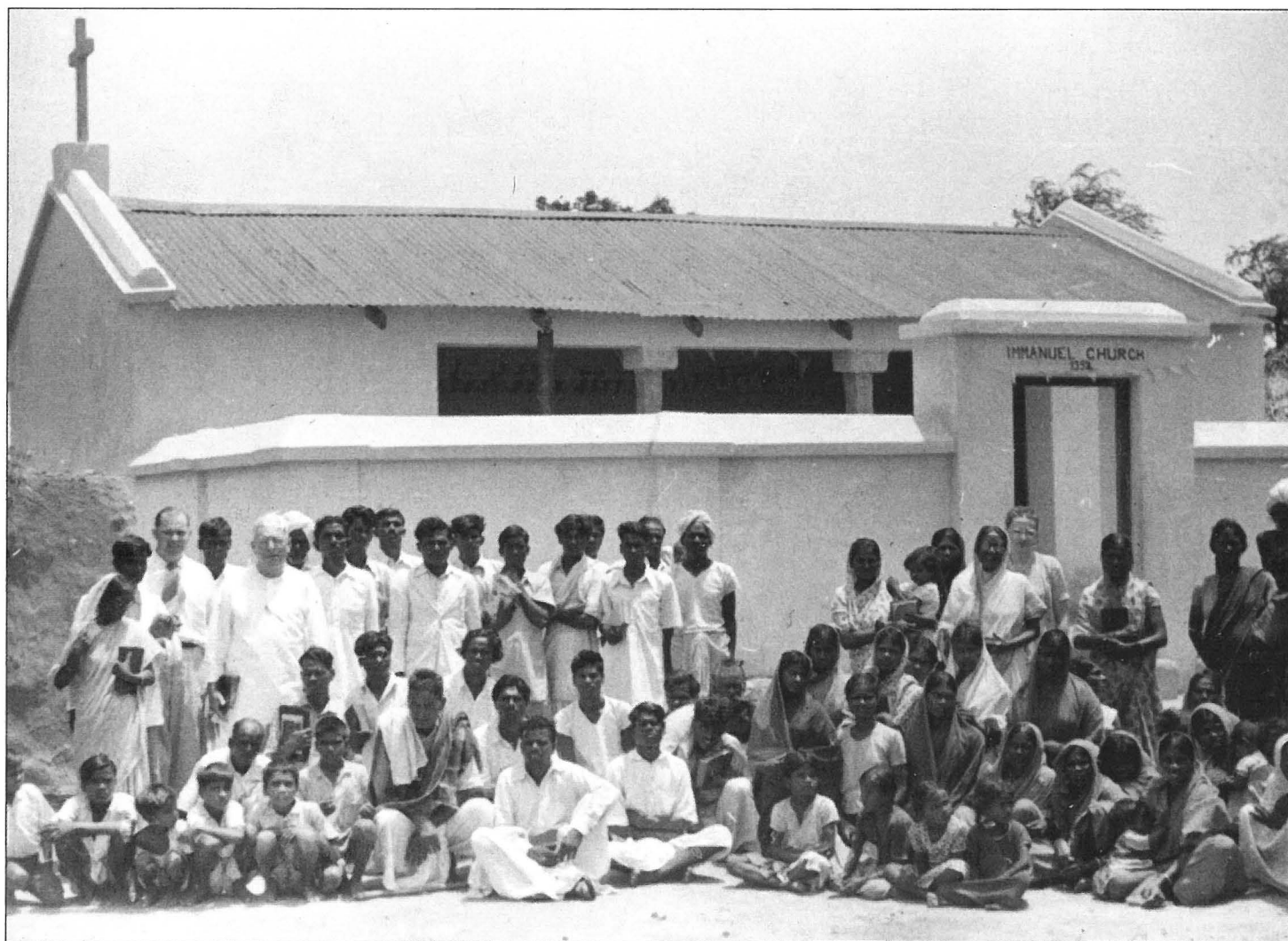
Some of the attendees at the 1961 MB convention in Uppal. (CMBS Fresno)



Church workers B. A. Bose and A. Jayanna helping serve curry and rice at the 1961 MB convention in Uppal. (CMBS Fresno)



Harvest festival offerings — grain, vegetables, chickens and clothes — at the Deverakonda compound church. (CMBS Fresno)



Members of the congregation in Beemnapalli in front of their church. They were responsible for the foundations, walls, flooring, doors and windows of their new church. Women of ladies aid group of the MB church in Dallas, Oregon, helped them pay for its roof. The missionaries in the picture are Ted Fast and P. V. Balzer (to the left) and Esther Fast (to the right). (CMBS Fresno)

Leaders

*T*he first missionaries were pioneers. They stepped from a known world into an unknown world willing to take on all the risks associated therewith in responding to the call they had “heard” from God and their church.

They and those who followed built programs and institutions and carried on with the responsibility of “parenting” the church’s new members in their spiritual growth and, now, their community life together.

Partnerships with local peoples were important in the lives of the missionaries from the day they arrived. After all, without such how would the missionaries have been able to bridge the gaps in perspective, understanding and interpretation with which they were confronted?

Partnerships, however, became increasingly “equal” in how they were organized and enacted as local leaders assumed more and more authority.

Village pastors, such as Rev. Onguri L. Benjamin, pictured here with his wife Margaret and their children, were among the principal leaders in the early years of the MB church in India. (CMBS Fresno)



Finally, as the MB church among the Telugus grew into maturity, it increasingly welcomed outsiders, whatever their designations, as joint “participants” in their worship and work together.

But while missionaries framed and facilitated the introduction of the gospel in new areas, the most important actors in what eventually transpired were not the missionaries but those who joined them. Lesslie Newbigin (1982: 150) explains for the church in general under missionary attention that the “deliberate acts of missions” are not the only, perhaps not even the most important, ways in which people in any area learn about the gospel and that an entire history of the church’s expansion might in fact be “written with very few missionary names in it.”

And so it was among the MBs. The missionaries played a precipitating role in all that transpired. But nothing would have remained after they left if what they introduced hadn’t made sense and been embodied locally. And this happened under local leadership, in all that it involved in the way of prayerful good faith, initiative, risk taking and persuasion.

Accordingly, listed in honor and with appreciation by field area in this section alongside the pictures of some of the leaders of the MB church in India through its mission period are the names of all of the pastors who served in the churches of the conference through this era.



Behind the scenes more frequently than in front, so-called “Bible women” such as the woman pictured here, did much of the work in the growth and development of the MB church in India.
(CMBS Fresno)



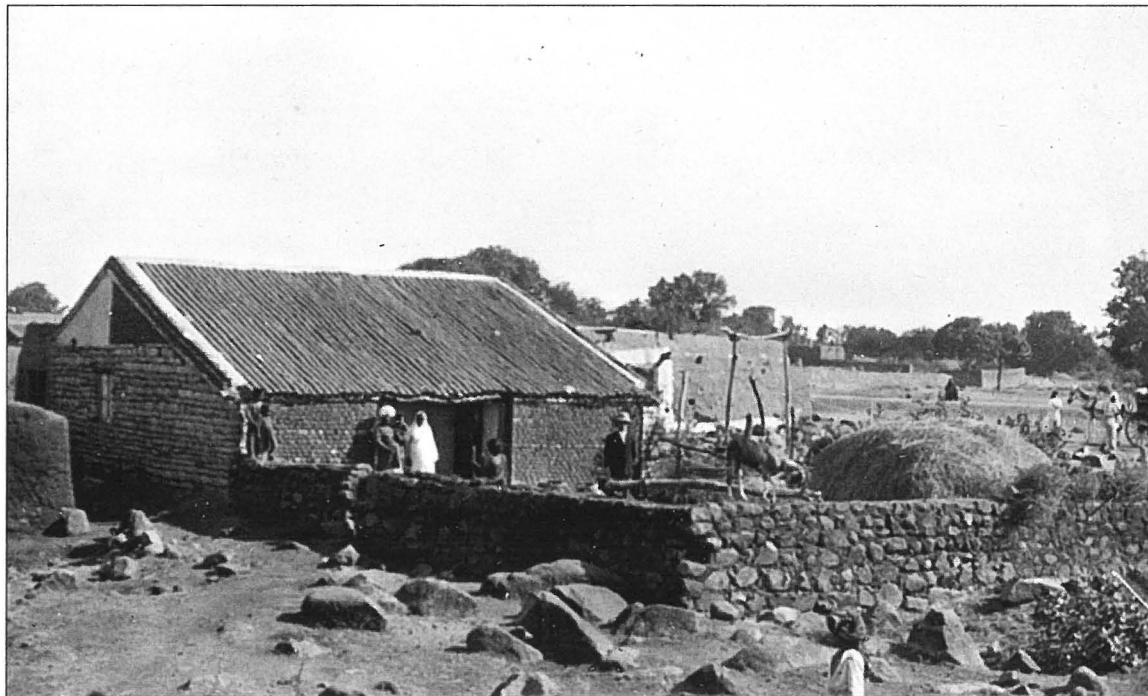
Pastors in training, Nagarkurnool, about 1924. (CMBS Fresno)

The Indian Pastors of the MB Church of India, 1899-1972*

Kalvakurty

Rev. Dhalavai Narayya
(Dindichinthapalli)
T. Ramaiah (Kalvakurty)
V. Simon (Ragupathipeta)
G. Jeevaratnam (Kalvakurty)
S. Daniel (Kalvakurty)
R. Ratnam (Aurupalli)
I. Aron (Tharnikallu)
P. Deevapriyam (Panjugula)
Thagaram Deevapriyam (Veldanda)
Alladi Isaac (Veldanda)
Jangali Deevasahayam (Veldanda)
M. John Papaya (Peddapuram)
Misala Amos (Dindichintapalli)
Thagaram Sadhu (Panjugula)
P. V. Harry (Kalvakurty)
Shiruguri George (Adhirala)
N. S. Abraham (Kalvakurty)
M. Darnabasu (Racharlapalli)
Bashipogu Pethuru (Thalakondapalli)
P. V. Abraham (Chandhurupalli)

Rev. P. S. Zechariah (Kalvakurty)
Rev. G. C. Krupaiah (Akuthotapalli)
Rev. M. P. John (Veldanda)
Rev. K. Peter (Mittasadhagodu)
Rev. K. Samuel (Dindichintapalli)
P. Paul (Urkonda)
G. Samuel (Rasuru)
V. Pethuru (Tharnikallu)
J. Lingaiah (Chandhurupalli)
I. Elisha (Kawntamonipalli)
V. P. Saul (Gattueppalappalli)
G. Elisha (Jivlella)
I. B. Andhraiah (Aurupalli)
Y. Davidu (Midjilla)
T. Yacob (Singampalli)
P. Mathai (Sirasanagandla)
B. Simon (Midjilla)
T. J. Yacob (Jagaboenipalli)
K. Samuel (Chilarupalli)
T. Gamalielu (Gagaboenipalli)
V. Paul (Amangallu)



A village church cum pastor's house, shown here with its compound wall under construction. (FA)

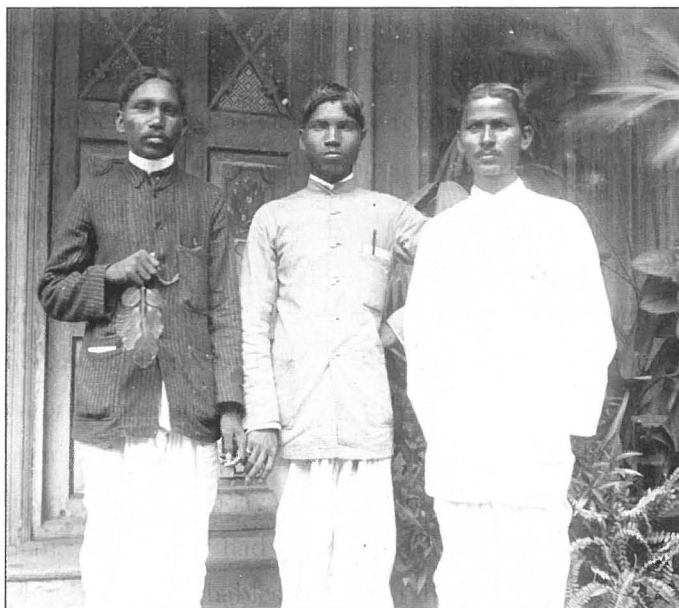
*As supplied by Dr. I. P. Asbeervadam, Director, MB Brethren Historical Commission, MBCBC, Shamsabad.



(Front row, l-r) B. Sundaramma, Mrs. G. Jonab, K. Lorenamma, B. Rabelamma, K. Sujanamma, (unidentified), Mrs. V. Elisha; (back row, l-r) unidentified, Mrs. Y. Jacob, B. Mariamma, (unidentified), M. Karunamma. (HCA Shamsabad)



"Sister Premaleela John, assistant director at a youth camp, presenting a flannelgraph lesson."
(CMBS Fresno)



"Students (l-r) G. Matthen; O.L. Benjamin and M. Enoch preparing at seminary for the ministry." (CMBS Fresno)



Rev. M.N. and Mrs. Elizabeth Jeevarathnam and their family, in the 1940s. (EA)

Gadwal

Bhumpagu Kistaiah (Pudor)
 Sankati Thimmaiah (Ija)
 Mannam Elisha (Ija)
 Suligiri Pethuru (Gadwal)
 Akepogu John (Yemmiganuru)
 Sappagu Ayyappa (Gadwal)
 Sandhepagu Luka (Ija)
 S. Simon (Puluchintha)
 Nallapothula Davidhu (Dhanvada)
 Kashepagu Davidhu
 (Chinnathandrapadu)
 Akepogu Samuel (Nagardoddi)
 Mandla Hanumanthaiah (Bhudhur)
 Mandla Hushenappa (Puluchintha)
 Akepogu Laxmaiah (Marlabidu)
 Akepogu Daniel (Atmakur)
 Orikunta Yoseph (Chennipadu)
 Konki Daniel (Chinnathandrapadu)
 Maddipogu John (Jammichedu)
 Suligiri Jeevaratnam (Thakkashila)
 Mallepogu Dhevadhanamu (Uppal)
 Akepogu Yacobi (Beerelly)
 Nallapothula Rubenu (Marlabidu)
 Madepogu Daniel (Etikyala)

Bairapagu Rajaratnam (Maddelabanda)
 Bairapagu Davidhu (Maddelabanda)
 Akepogu Peter (Rajoli)
 S. Lazar (Chamalagudur)
 Rev. Bhumpagu Aharonu (Gadwal)
 Rev. Akepogu Thomas (Maldhakallu)
 Rev. Kashepagu George (Etikyal)
 Rev. Suligiri Davidhu (Pudur)
 Akepogu John (Adhavani)
 Bhumpagu Samuel (Pedddadhanvada)
 Nallapothulu Samuel (Rajoli)
 Nayakapula Isaiah (Mididhoddi)
 P. Simonu (Thumukunta)
 Gaggula Paul (Maddelabanda)
 K. Danielu (Konkala)
 Reddypogu Dhevadhanamu (Mandhoddi)
 Sankati Moses (Shagidona)
 Madepagu Samuel (Thumilla)
 Palakommu Samuel (Gurjala)
 Gamur Dhevadhanamu
 (Peddathandrapadu)
 M. Adhamu (Lingapuram)
 G. Anandam (Gurjala)
 M. A. Esaku (Anugabala)
 Kashepagu Benjamin (Rampuram)
 Nalapothula Peter (Budhur)

Graduates of the English Class at the Bible Junior College, Shamsabad, about 1958: (front row, l-r) M. Jessi John, P. G. Rajanandan, B. Sethu, M. R. Bhaskar; (back row, l-r) B. A. Geroge, S. J. Joseph, R. S. Lemuel, S. S. Krupaiah. (HCA Shamsabad)



Leaders of the Zion MB Church in Chinnachintakunta, about 1955: (front row, l-r) C. Samuel, S. Adam, G. Krupaiah, C. Prasangi, G. Cornelius; back row, (l-r) G. P. George, G. Moshe, G. K. Yohan, C. Peter, S. Boaz, C. Vandanam. (HCA Shamsabad)



Deverakonda

Rev. J. Y. Abraham
 Rev. G. Samuel
 Rev. Addanki David
 Rev. Addanki Nathaniel
 Rev. G. Paul
 Rev. Dalavai Naraiah (Angadipeta)
 Rev. K. Henri
 Rev. Gangaram Benjamín (C' Cherlapalli)

Rev. T. S. Rangaiah (Deverakonda)
 M. Kanthaiah (Gudipalli)
 M. Guruvaiah
 M. Moshe (Rainpalem)
 M. Peter (Kandukuru)
 Gandham Albert Samuel (Deverakonda)
 V. Samson
 N. Ramaiah (Chintapalli)
 N. Silas

Gandham Benjamin (Angadipeta)
 Dhosapati Benjamin (Peddamunigal)
 Kore Zechariah (Mudhikonda)
 Kore Nehemiaiah (Polepalli)
 Peerla Ratnam (Batlapalli)
 Medhari Moshe (Gudipalli)
 Bachigalla Krupaiah (Goneboenipalli)
 Rev. G. Gamalielu (Deverakonda)
 Madugala Matthaiah (Deverakonda)
 Rev. M. C. Laban (Deverakonda)
 Rev. B. V. Peter (Kondabhimanapali)
 P. S. Devadhanamu (Gadiyagowravaram)
 P. S. Kanthaiah (Nampalli)
 S. L. Rajaratnam (Peruvala)
 N. D. Kanthaiah (Kachavaram)
 Y. David (Mosangi)
 N. Samuel (Angadipeta)
 A. R. Eliah (Kambalpalli)
 V. Isaac (Thoukalapuram)
 A. Lazaru (Akkampalli)
 A. V. Matthai (Gottimukala)
 M. B. Moshe (Kandukuru)

K. Nathanielu (Deverakonda)
 E. David (Vavilkol)
 G. Eliah (Guntapalli)
Nagarkurnool
 Rev. G. Lazarus (Thutkurty)
 Rev. Dalavai Naraiah (Waddemanu)
 Thaluri Ezra (Thelakapalli)
 Thaluri Samuelu (Elapuram)
 Aharonu Kelly (Yadhavareddypalli)
 Ashapogu C. Samuelu (Vattayam)
 Bejavad Moshe (Thimajipeta)
 Ginrapalli John (Peddapalli)
 K. John (Thirmalapuram)
 Perike V. Mark (Nagarkurnool)
 R. David Ram (Polchettipalli)
 Pulukuri Yosepu (Achampeta)
 Bandaru Samuel (Uppununthala)
 Shiruguri Yacobu (Balanpalli)
 Ennam Anthaiah (Kummera)
 Thagaram Paul (Amarepalli)
 Banda Eliah (Thirmalapuram)
 Onguru V. Esaac (Manganuru)



The church and the pastor's house in Amrabad (Pastor Devadanam standing third from left), about 1955. (HCA Shamsabad)



A "Governing Council" was organized among the MBs in India as administrative responsibilities passed more and more completely from missionary to Indian national supervision. Pictured here (l-r) are the members of the first Governing Council of the MB church of India, in 1958: (first row) Dr. Jake Friesen, Rev. B. K. Aaron, Rev. John A. Wiebe, Rev. R. David Ram, Rev. A. A. Unruh, Rev. V. Abraham, Rev. P. V. Balzer, Rev. A. K. John; (middle row) Dr. Gandham Samuel, Rev. P. V. Gerhardt, Rev. Jonnalagadda John, Rev. Henry Poetker, Rev. K. S. Premaiah, Rev. M. B. John, Rev. K. A. Albert Kelly; (back row) Rev. N. M. Mark, Dr. P. B. Isaac, Caleb D. Bella, G. Jeevaratnam, K. Peter, Rev. Franz Joshua, (unidentified). (CMBS Fresno)

Rev. P. V. Gerahardu (Waddemanu)
 Rev. M. N. Jeevaratnam (Amrabad)
 Rev. C. J. Asheervadamu (Ramasipalli)
 V. P. Samuelu (Aleru)
 Albert Kelly (Yadavareddipalli)
 B. Nathanielu (Nagarkurnool)
 T. P. Ezra (Buddasamudram)
 P. John (Vannapatla)
 A. Jacob (Thimmajipeta)
 S. Devadhanam (Chintalonipalli)
 D. Essac (Polchettipalli)
 Banda Yobu (Thirmalapuram)
 S. Samuel (Amrabad)

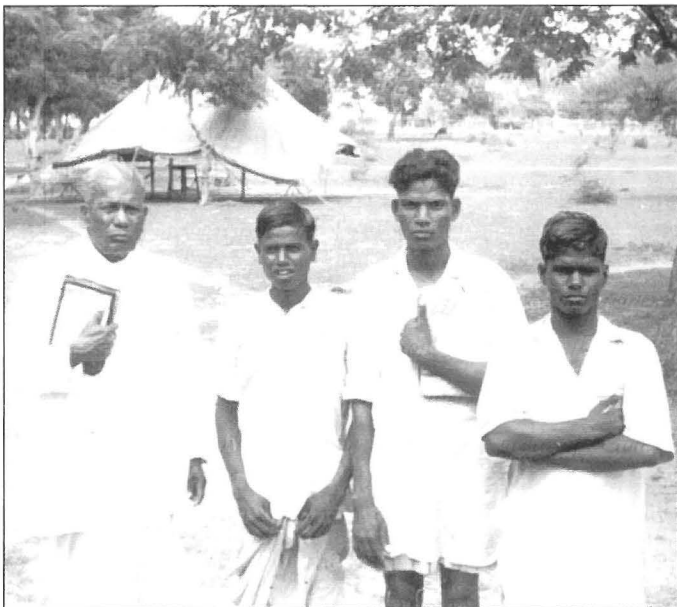
Narayanpet

D. Yohanu (Narayanapeta)
 B. Moshe
 Kaleb D. Bella (Narayanapeta)
 K. Nathanielu (Marikal)
 Rev. N. A. John (Vankasambram)
 P. J. Prakashamu (Narayanapeta)
 A. John (Utkuru)
 J. Samuelu (Kolluru)
 M. K. Joseph (Kollampalli)
 E. T. David (Lankala)
 N. Chandraiah (Narva)

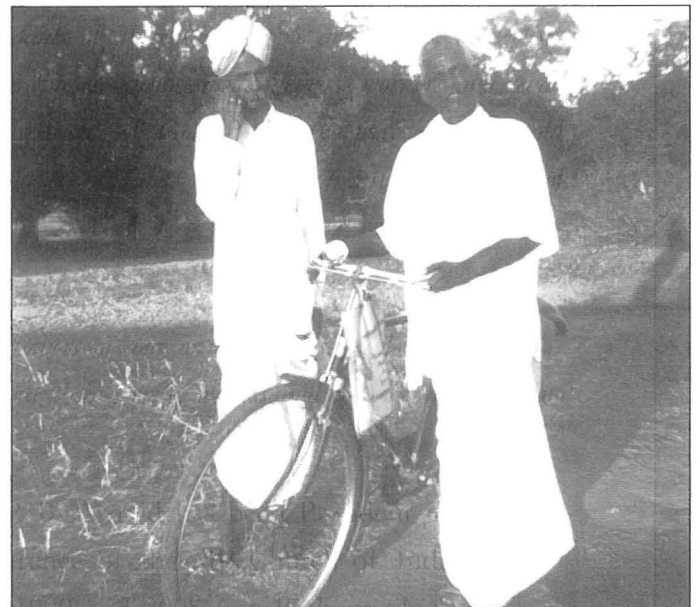
G. Thomas (Ujjeli)
 M. T. Mark (Makthal)
 C. Paul (Thangidigi)

Mahbubnagar

Rev. B. Ambrosu (Mahabubnagar)
 Rev. M. S. Paul (Addakula)
 Rev. M. Simon (Narva)
 K. P. Gourappa (Bethlehemu)
 K. C. Gourappa (Bethlehemu)
 M. C. Ratnamu (Addakula)
 J. K. Nathaniel (Nellikondi)
 Medhari Paul (Kaukuntla)
 Bhumpagu Abrahamu (Buthupuru)
 Rev. Jonalagadda John (Jadcherla)
 Rev. M. B. John (Mahabubnagar)
 Rev. M. P. Sudharshanamu (Amarachinta)
 Rev. J. Paranjothi
 Rev. R. R. K. Murthy
 C. Parkaru (Jadcherla)
 N. C. Samuelu (Addakula)
 M. J. Isaiah (Mahammadabad)
 P. Peter (Soudapuram)
 P. Isaac (Kusumasamudhram)
 B. Benjamin (Emmangandla)
 G. Azaraiah (Burgupalli)



Pastor Gamalielu with three of his students in a village area between Kalvakurthi and Deverakonda, 1964. (HCA Shamsabad)



Rev. Jonnalagadda John (right), who served as pastor for many years in Jadcherla, 1958. (HCA Shamsabad)



Some of the evangelists and other church workers of the Gadval area at Christmas time, 1963 (as identified on the back of the picture, (not all were indentified, particularly in the third row), l-r): (front row) B. Santhoshamma and children; (second row) B. Aaron, B. Z. John, A. Abraham, A. Suryakanthamma, G. James, B. A. George, A. K. John; (third row) Kanthamma, Premamma, A. Santhoshamma, Rojamma; (fourth row) A. S. Yacob, K. B. George, S. David, N. Samuel, M. Adam, S. Jeevaratnam, S. Isaiah, O. Yoseph, K. Daniel; (back row) M. Devadanam, G. Anandam, B. K. Samuel, G. Paul, P. Simon, S. Moses. (HCA Shamsabad)



*Makthal Narayanpet
Field Association
Executive Committee,
1966: (l-r) Rev. E. T.
David, Rev. Nindi John,
B. Samuel, C. Devadas.
(HCA Shamsabbad)*

Wanaparty

Rev. C. L. Abraham (Wanaparthi)
Rev. Gadhela John (Wanaparthi)
M. N. Joseph (Kothakota)
C. Yacobi (Edhutla)
D. M. Joseph (Chinnaguntapalli)
M. Elisha (Chinnaguntapalli)
Gorla Yacobi (Suguru)
Kothakota Rubenu (Gopalpeta)
Pasupula Pethuru (Buddavaram)
Buthapati Pethuru (Gopalpeta)
Bolly Samuelu (Apparala)
Bhumpagu Abraham (Rajapuram)
Bhumpagu Davidhu (Pangallu)
Gaddala J. Devadhanam (Thadiparty)
Pasupula Gabrielu (Polikepadu)
Dunna Devadhanam (Pasireddypalli)
Endhurapalli Krupaiah (Suguru)
Janampalli Andhariah (Mandhadi)
Gorla Nathanu (Chinnaguntapalli)

Paniganti Isaiah (Shagapur)
Marri Yohanu (Peddmandhadi)
Marri Mark (Shagapur)
Vadapalli Krupaiah (Pebberu)
Appala Raju (Wanaparthi)
Kommu Rubenu (Wanaparthi)
A. Raju (Wanaparthi)
Rev. P. B. Abraham (Wanaparthi)
Rev. N. M. Mark (Gopalpeta)
Rev. P. B. Benjamin (Gollapalli)
G. M. Rufus (Elluru)
Rev. B. Danielu (Pebberu)
J. C. Kalebu (Kothakota)
K. J. Thomas (Chinnaguntapalli)
J. David (Kothakota)
E. P. Abelu (Khillapangallu)
J. Zecharaiah (Kalwakolu)

Shamshabad

Rev. Onguri L. Benjamin (Shamshabad)

Rev. R. David Ram (Shadnagar)
 D. M. Satyanandhamu (Amirpeta)
 M. R. John (Amirpeta)
 Maddemadugula Nehemaiah (Solipeta)
 S. Pethuru (Kothur)
 Kore Ratnam (Debbalagudem)
 Konda Samuel (Palamakula)
 Kandhula David (Palamakula)
 Goli Prasangi (Nakertamedipalli)
 Jutike David
 Gorati Devadasu
 Makamalla Samuelu
 J. Peter (Bhurgula)
 G. Jacob (Kothvalgudem)
 V. Mathai (Maddur)
 M. Sathyanandam (Saudhargudam)
 P. Yosepu (Kurimidde)
 Rev. D. J. Arthur (Shamshabad)
 Rev. N. P. James (Shamshabad)
 K. E. Paul (Shabad)
 V. Elisha (Lemur)
 G. Yona (Maheshwaram)
 B. Lazarus (Penjerla)

R. Chandhraiah (Papireddygudem)
 M. Ezra (Nakertamedipalli)
 A. Korneli (Nandhiwanaparty)
 B. S. Eliah (Peddavidu)
 V. Shethu (Mallapuram)
 Rev. C. Henri (Udemgadda)
 B. Abraham (Mankal)
 V. K. Rufus (Shamshabad)
 R. S. Lemuel (Shamshabad)
 S. J. Joseph (Shamshabad)

Hughestown

Rev. Janraspalli Levi (Hughestown)
 Rev. Vemavarapu Abraham
 (Ibrahimpattanam)
 Rev. G. S. Douglas (Hughestown)
 Bandaru Remsan (Malakpeta)
 Bandaru Danielu (Raviriyala)
 Kanamala Narayya
 P. Elaiah (Agapalli)
 Madhugula Anoku (Arutla)
 Bikki Sudharshanam (Shivannagudem)
 Bellem Samuelu (Narayanapuram)
 Maddemadugula Danielu



*(Front row, seated, l-r)
 Rev. P. B. Abraham,
 Rev. P. V. Gerhardt, Rev.
 N. M. Mark; (back row,
 the last four adults on the
 right, l-r) Polchettipalli
 Devasahayam and his wife
 Suzanamma, and K. Y.
 Rajaratnam and his wife
 Sugnanamma. (HCA
 Shamsabad)*



*Conference leaders (l-r)
P. V. Gerhardt
M. B. John, G. S. Paul,
and B. A. George, 1963.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*MB Bible Institute
student, eventually
principal, S. Solomon
(background right)
supervising work on the
Institute's compound, about
1960. (CMBS Fresno)*

Thatapudi Pichaiah
Veshapogu Samuel
Patra Kothaiah (Sarurnagar)
Gongadi Kondaiah (Raviriyala)
Thupili Ratnam Rangaiah
P. Johua (Agapalli)
Chappidi Esaac (Dhonipamula)
Rev. B. P. Abelu (Hughestown)

Rev. P. Simon (Eliminedu)
Rev. Mathai (Pethulla)
Rev. A. Eliah (Kongararaviriyala)
V. Moshe (Edlagudem)
Borra John (Gouravavelli)
K. Devasahayamu (Dhandumalkapuram)
P. Simhadhri (Malakapeta)

Change and Development

The big story in development as it occurred in relation to the work of the missionaries and their coworkers was in the development of the church, the church as a grouping of persons who considered themselves to be “brothers” and “sisters” in the sight of the Lord, heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God, whatever their differences.

Wonderfully freeing this for all who took it in, certainly including the “no people” at the bottom of the caste system and below the pale of Hinduism . . . those whose degradation, according to the general teachings of this system, was to be understood in relation to badly lived past lives, those whose track to “salvation,” again by the general teachings of this system, could only lie in the acceptance of one’s current circumstances (or *dharma*) in the hope of better circumstances in lives still to come.

Wonderfully freeing this for all who took it in, certainly including the “no people” at the bottom of the system as they came to understand that they could benefit in the relationships, resources and programs that now opened up for them.



*Groundbreaking ceremonies
for a new church in the
Wanaparthy area, March
1966, missionary A. A.
Unrub with the spade.
(CMBS Fresno)*

Writing about social change in India, the well known anthropologist M. N. Srinivas long ago wrote (1966) about processes “internal” as well as “external” to the Indian system of ordering and interpretation (1966). Among the first, he referred to “Sanskritization,” the process (to which we’ve already referred, in Chapter 7) by which a lower level group adopts the practices and understandings of a group or groups higher in the ordering, and, over the course of time, is able to adjust its positioning. Among the latter, he includes “Westernization” and “Secularization.”

Many scholars have adjusted and refined Srinivas’ introductions over the decades. Yet they remain helpful for us even as they were first proposed. Blocked below and outside the Hindu ordering — and there providing a “cushion” upon which all of the wonders of this ordering above them could be organized — the Dalits were blocked also from taking advantage of what might otherwise have been possible for them through Sanskritization.

On the other hand, aligned as the missionaries were with both Western and secular (where a differentiation between the “things of God” and the “things of man” occurs) influences, new possibilities opened up with their coming, for instance, in education, particularly in the education of females; in new understandings of health and sanitation and health care; in the chance to join voluntary associations not delimited by caste affiliation; in leadership training; in participatory planning; in short-circuiting established pathways in the securing of employment; in acquiring new skills; in knowledge about the outside world; in access to the powers in place.

To be sure, most of the Christians remained in their villages. Moreover, the new avenues and opportunities the missionaries opened up were not restricted to Christians alone. But the Christians were first in line, the first to be served. And in the course of time the church program included a printing press, extension literacy classes, the distribution of relevant reading materials, the introduction of new technologies (for example, in the tanning of leather), special programs for women and children, radio programs and so on alongside the introduction of schools and clinics and hospitals.



Missionary Ted Fast helping with the laying of the foundation stone for the new church in Rajoli (CMBS Fresno)

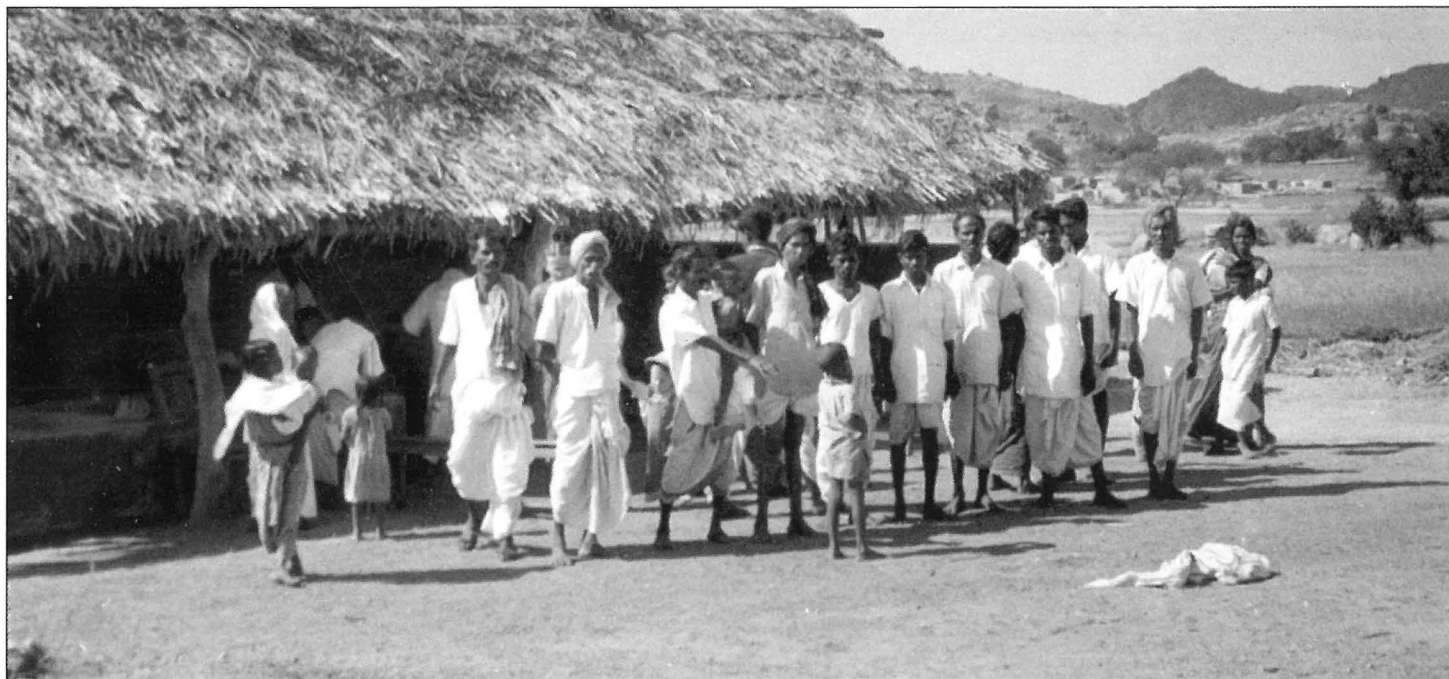
*Starving children, now to receive attention, in the early days of the MB mission program in the Nizam's Dominions.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*Orphan girls adopted by missionary Katharina Lobrenz, here pictured playing "grown ups."
(CMBS Fresno)*



(Below) Christians in the Deverakonda area in front of the building they had just built as a tannery in regularizing their trade, their village in the background. (CMBS Fresno)



Village Pastors and Social Development

Rev. Dr. R.S. Lemuel was born in the late 1930s. He has held many positions of leadership and responsibility within the MB Church of India over the years. Currently Vice President of the Governing Council of the India. MB Church, he remembers the 1940s as follows (adapted from Lemuel, 2008: 41-42):

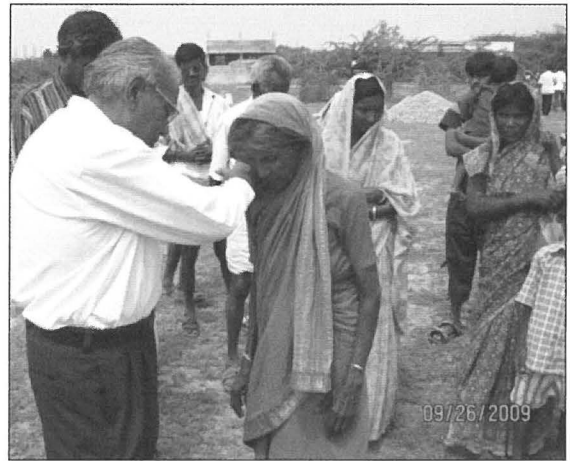
“The pioneer missionaries found very backward conditions when they arrived. The people were very poor, especially the people of the lowest strata. Many were attacked by smallpox and cholera and other diseases from time to time. Often no health facilities were available. As bullock cart transportation was the only transportation available, people generally had to walk from place to place.

“The people at the bottom, or ‘Untouchables,’ as people often referred to them then, were generally not allowed to draw water at common wells and lived in huts outside the main village. Many at this level were forced to migrate during the hot months of the year to search for work.

“The pioneer missionaries sent national preachers to work in the villages, many of which were very isolated. Though the preachers and their families were sent primarily to preach the gospel, they also were compelled by the love of Christ to get involved in welfare activities. Many times many of the villagers did not even have enough to eat, and the preachers helped with food as they could. They also helped the sick with medicines, helped those who needed additional help find it, helped as they could with clothing, taught stitching and other things to the women in order to help them find jobs, helped with the building of churches and places and housing.

“Maybe the greatest contribution of the village pastors was to teach and encourage education. The pastors in those days, with their schooling and Bible school training, were often the best educated in the villages in which they worked. They could teach the alphabet to the people interested, even at first by drawing the letters of the alphabet in the sand. In the early days most of the villagers were not even in a position to contact people above them with their requests.

“So much has changed since those early days. But our preachers played a vital role in the development of the villages in our area from the beginning.”



Rev. R. S. Lemuel praying with church members on the site of their proposed new church in Sipuram, near Maktbal, April 2009. (FA)



Participants in a writer's workshop in Mabbubnagar in 1968 (left to right): G. Bhagvandos (radio technician); R. R. K Murthy (literature director); Chelliah Reuben (teacher), M. B. John (pastor); P. B. Ezra (insurance agent); M. A. Prakasham (seated, government typist); N. Michael (college student); M. Balakistaiah (radio technician); N. Martin Luther (teacher); Anne Suderman (missionary); D. I. Shubacher (teacher); Mrs. R. R. K. Murthy (radio fellowship); Miss Radon (writing specialist); P. G. Rajanadam (teacher); Hannah Kompally (women's evangelist); Helen Harder (missionary). (CMBS Fresno)



Pastor M. B. John speaks to fourteen candidates for baptism (standing to right, not pictured) as high school girls listen and learn. (CMBS Fresno)



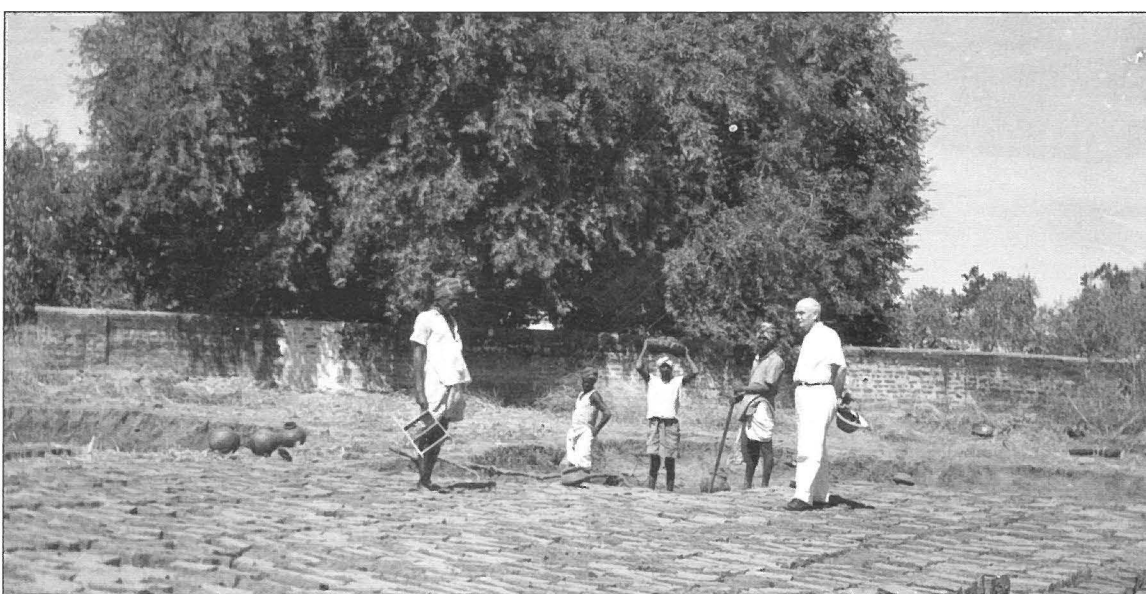
Mission school teachers and missionaries - Ernest Schmidt (middle left), Evelyn Schmidt (center, to the left), Anna Lohrenz (center, to the right), J. H. Lohrenz and Julius Kasper (back, to the right) - at the convention of MB churches held in Shamsabad in 1954. (CMBS Fresno)



Kerosene tin buckets to replace buckets made of leather at a village well.
(CMBS Fresno)



Machinist V. David (right) and an assistant working in the maintenance shop on the hospital compound in Jadcherla. (CMBS Fresno)



Making bricks for the new church building in Mabbubnagar on the compound in Mabbubnagar in 1955. (CMBS Fresno)



(Left to right) D. J. Arthur, P. V. Balzer, N. P. James, R. R. K. Murthy, M. J. Jessie, J. Paranjothi, R. S. Asbeervadam and B. A. George at a meeting in the United States, about 1972. (CMBS Fresno)

Learning Anew

The MBs in India opened their first primary school in Malakapet in 1904, their second in Nagarkurnool in 1907, their third in Wanaparthy in 1916. All of their compounds eventually included primary schools. Most also eventually included middle schools, and, by the late 1940s, two, Hughestown and Mahbubnagar, included high schools.

The missionaries encouraged formal education and literacy for adults and children alike both in appreciation of what education can mean in and of itself, and, in their evangelical tradition, to facilitate independent studies of the scriptures. They and their coworkers, as soon as possible co-missioners, organized Sunday schools, extension education programs, adult Bible and other studies, village schools. They encouraged and enabled the studies of their pastors, "Bible women" and lay leaders. In 1920, they set up their own program in theological education and leadership training. With the turn over in leadership responsibility that was looked for from the beginning, only two American missionaries were still formally involved in the conference's programs in education in 1960. By 1965, control in all such programs was under the authority of Indians alone.

Formal education was open to Muslim boys (and all but exclusively boys only) of well to do families in Hyderabad and other larger towns of the Nizam's Dominions through the first several decades of the twentieth century. Among Hindus it was open to children of the highest castes alone and, again, much more preferentially for boys than for girls.

Some Important Things about Prayer



Missionary Paul Hiebert leads a session at a seminar sponsored by the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India. (CMBS Fresno)

Learning in the mission setting went both ways, learning among the locals and learning among the missionaries. Missionary (later world renowned missiologist) Paul Hiebert explains some of what was involved in his own coming to terms with the communication of the gospel in the MB mission setting as follows (1982: 36).

“One day while teaching in the Bible School in Shamsabad I saw Yellayya standing in the door at the back of the class. He looked tired for he had walked many miles from

Muchintala where he was the elder of the church. I assigned the classroom reading, and then went with him to the office. When I asked why he had come, he said that a few weeks earlier small pox had come to the village and taken a number of children. Western doctors had tried to halt the plague but without success. Finally, in desperation, the village elders had sent for a diviner who told them that Maicamma, Goddess of Smallpox, was angry with the village. To satisfy her and stop the plague the village would have to perform the water buffalo sacrifice. The village elders went around to each household in the village to raise money to purchase the buffalo. When they came to the Christian homes, the Christians refused to give them anything, saying it was against their religious beliefs. The leaders were angry, pointing out that the goddess would not be satisfied until every household gave something as a token offering — even one paisa (or penny) would do. When the Christians refused, the elders forbade them to draw water from the village wells and the merchants refused to sell them food. In the end, some of the Christians had wanted to stop the harassment by giving a paisa, and telling God they didn't mean it, but Yellayya had refused to let them do so. Now, said Yellayya, one of the Christian girls was sick with smallpox and he wanted me to pray with him for God's healing in her life. As I kneeled, my mind was in turmoil. I had learned to pray as a child, studied prayer as a seminary student and preached on it as a pastor. But now I was to pray for a sick child as all the village watched to see if the Christian God was able to heal.”

Hiebert concludes with the words, “That morning old Yellayya, an illiterate Indian villager, began to teach me some of the important things about prayer.”

With the coming of the missionaries and their organization of schools, formal education became available to anyone the missionaries and their coworkers chose to admit, males and females alike on an equal basis, very quickly to transforming consequences. In illustration in 1931 in the Mahbubnagar District area (see the 1931 Census), an area encompassing almost all of the MB mission area:

The literacy rate among Christians was almost as high as it was for Muslims, and five times as high as it was even for Brahmins;

The literacy rate among Christian females dwarfed the literacy rates for females and males alike in other groupings by religion, but for Muslim males;

And, introducing English in instruction as the missionaries did, the literacy rates in English among Christians far exceeded the literacy rates in English for all other groupings in the population.

Literacy rates varied for different groups in the population by religion and other variables in the Nizam's Dominions. Overall, according to the Census of India, however, the rate of literacy among males aged five and over was 0.021 in 1911 and 0.085 in 1931, among females less than 0.01 in 1911 and 0.08 in 1931.

Just as for other programs in Christian education in India through the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, in short, the programs in education introduced by the missionaries in the MB mission area tended to work to the advantage of those in a position to participate. And a large percentage of the people in a position to participate were Christians, all but a handful of them out of Dalit backgrounds suppressed at the very bottom of village systems of social organization.

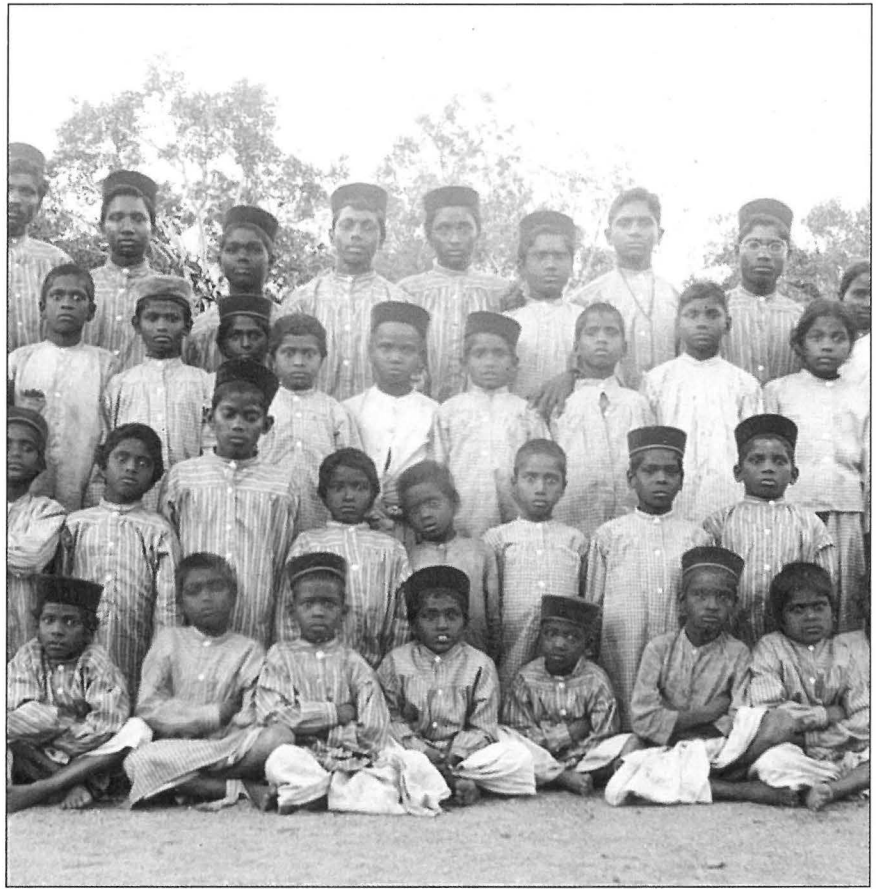


Anna Suderman (later Bergthold) teaching a class on the mission compound in Nalgonda in the 1899. (CMBS Fresno)

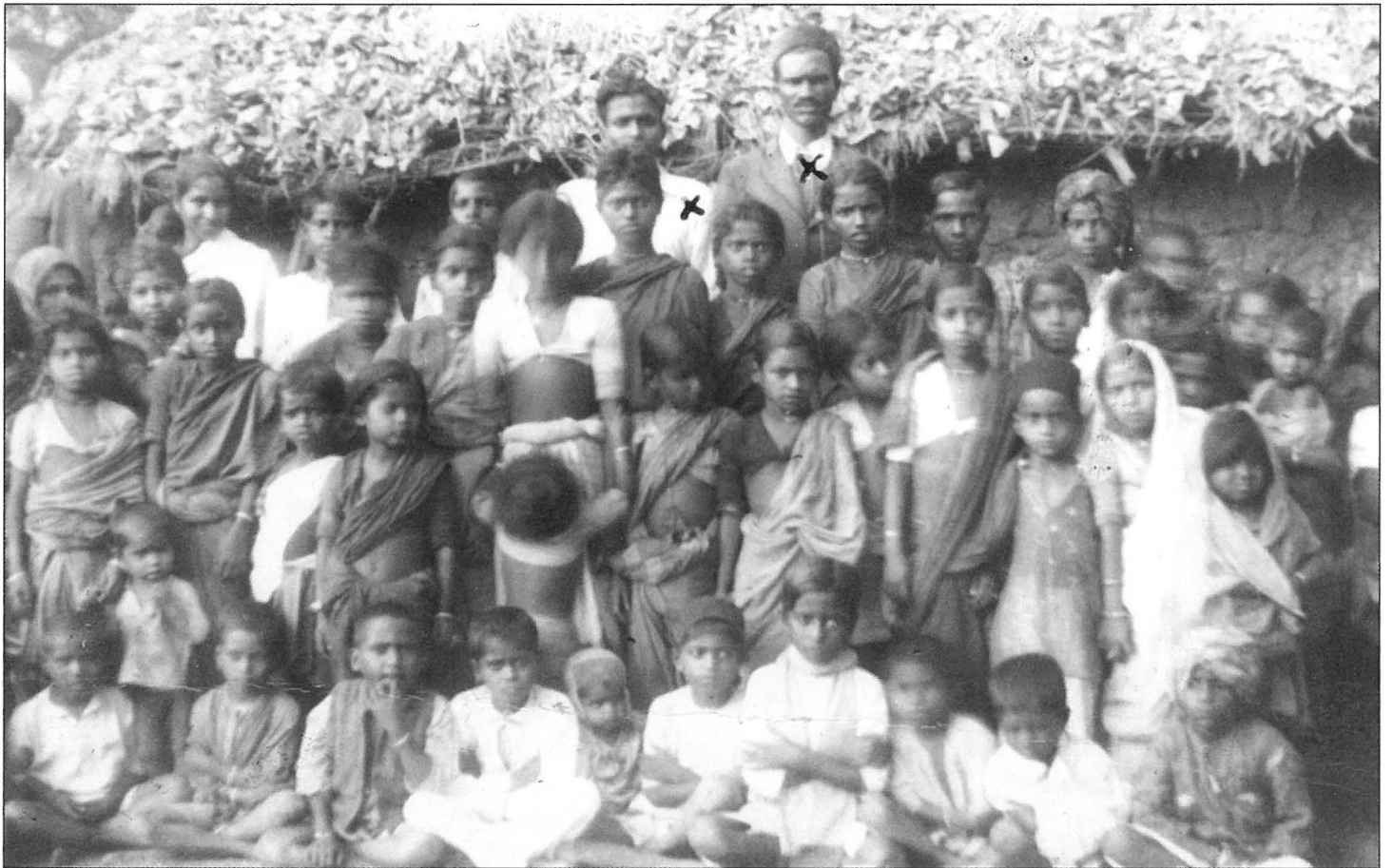


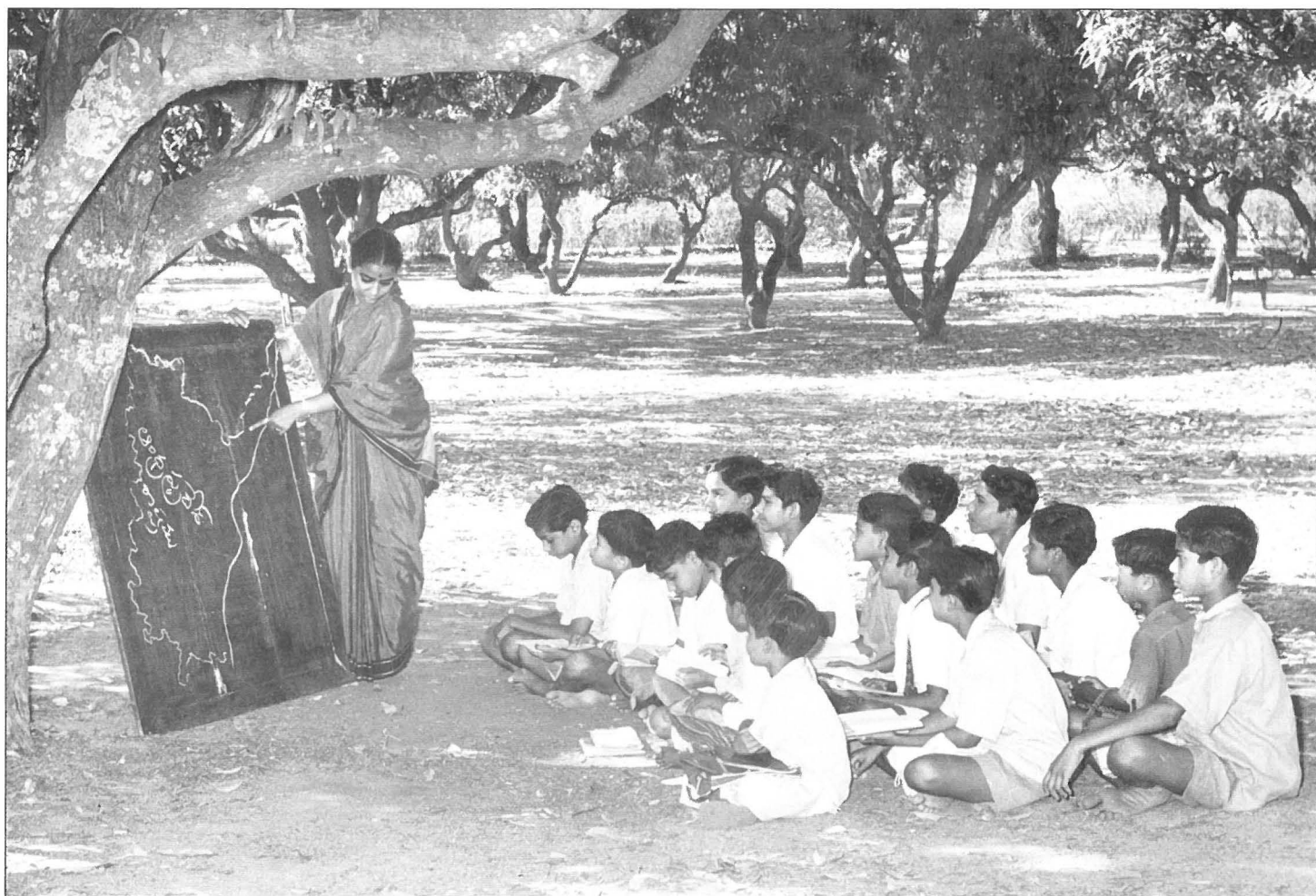
Students and teachers in front of their school in Malakapet, the first school organized by the North American MBs in India. (CMBS Fresno)

*Boarding school students in
Nagarkurnool in the early
years: entering new worlds.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*An "evening school" class
in the village of Sidhanti,
near Shamsabad, with
Pastor Samuel Douglas
and one of the school's
teachers standing in back.
(CMBS Fresno)*





*An open air classroom in
Medchal, 1965. (CMBS
Fresno)*

*High school hostel boys on
their way to classes in
Mabbubnagar in 1955.
(FA)*



*"Lady missionaries with
Bible women in
Nagarkurnool." (CMBS
Fresno)*



*Missionaries Margaret
Williams, Edna Gerdes and
Katie Siemens with girls'
camp planning committee,
about 1964. (CMBS
Fresno)*

Gifts of Healing

In the Gospel of Matthew we read that John the Baptist in prison, hearing of the works of Christ, sent two of his disciples to ask of him, "Are you the one who was to come? Or do we look for another?"

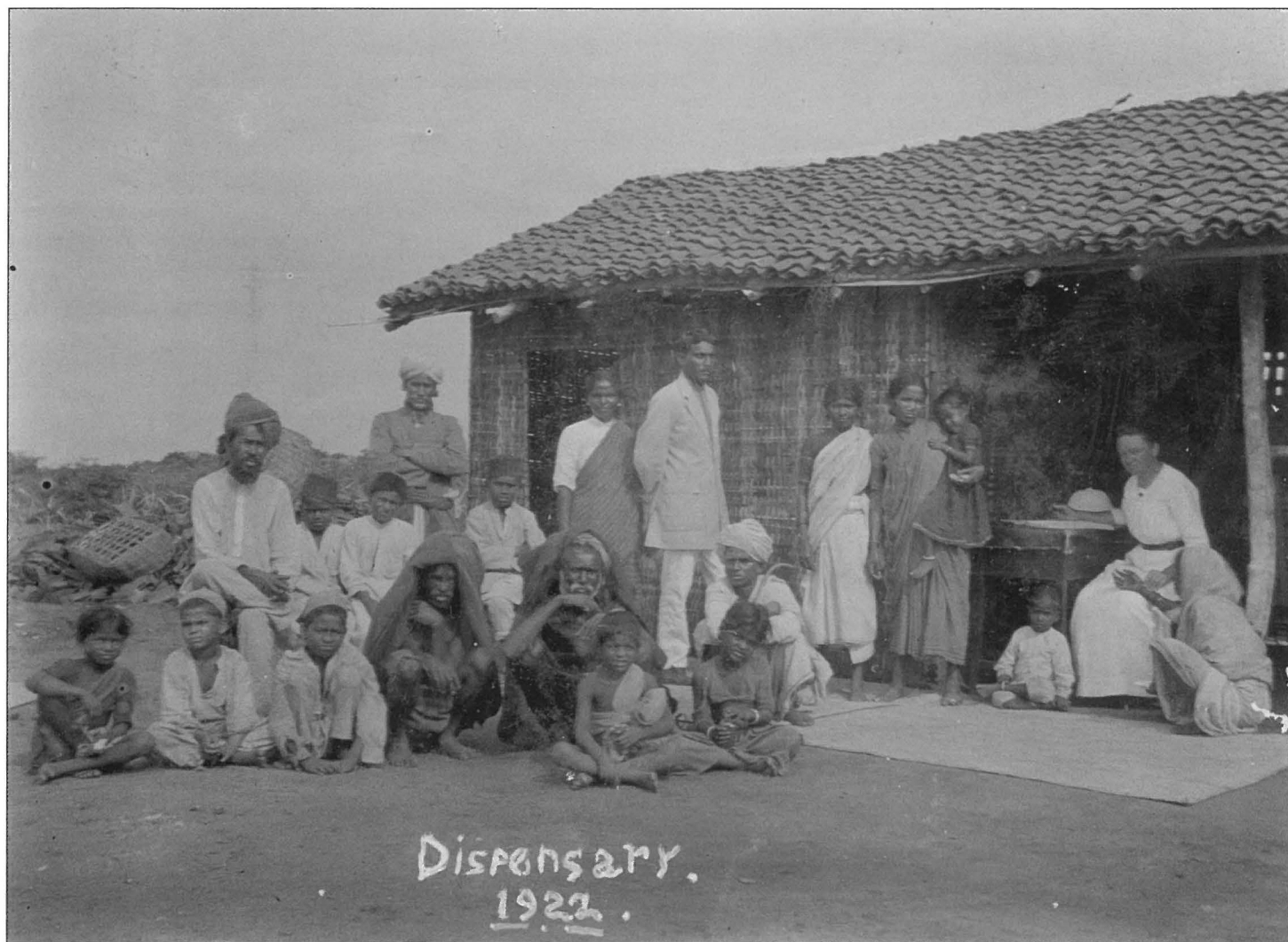
To which Jesus answered, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor."

From the beginning the MB missionaries were mindful of the command of Jesus to preach the gospel. Modeling their ministry after the ministry of Jesus, from the beginning also they did their best to respond to the physical and other needs of all who came to them for assistance. And countless numbers did.

The first hospital the MBs established was in Nagarkurnool in 1912. Later, they established hospitals also in Deverakonda, Shamshabad, Wanaparthy and Jadcherla. All along, but especially in the early years, the missionaries with at least a smattering of knowledge about fevers and sores and blisters and medication gave medicines to those who could use them. All along the missionaries and their coworkers organized village clinics. All along they emphasized the importance of sanitation and cleanliness for good health. All along they gave as much care to the poor, the marginal, those beaten down and the neglected as to the successful and powerful.

Bringing a patient to the mission hospital in Nalgonda in the early days. (CMBS Fresno)





Dr. Katherina Schellenberg with patients at her dispensary in Shamshabad, 1922. (CMBS Fresno)

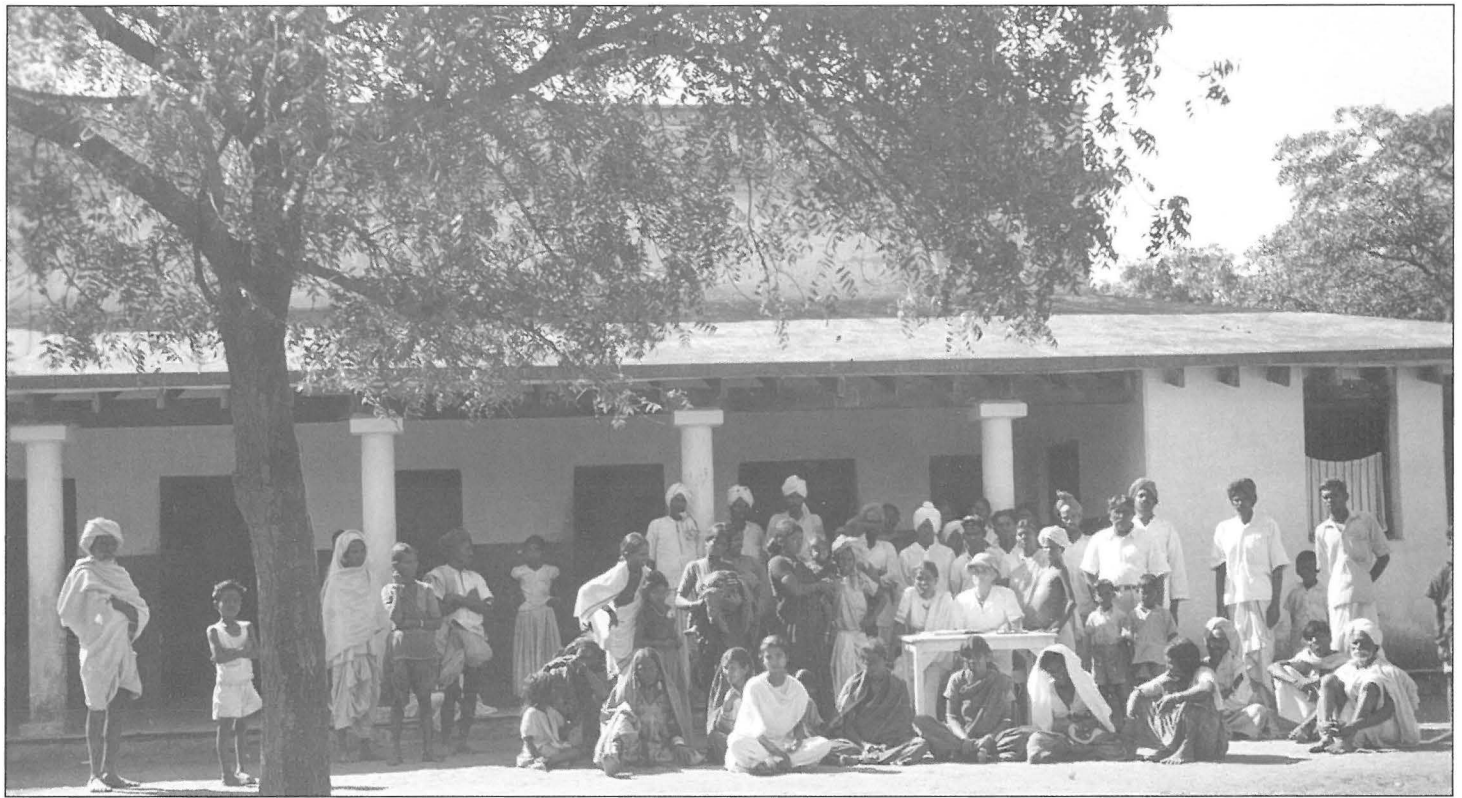
Most of the centers in the medical programs of the MBs in India were wound down in the two decades immediately following Independence as government run and privately organized hospitals, clinics and health centers were introduced across the length and breadth of Andhra Pradesh. And, by the middle 1970s, only the large Medical Center at Jadcherla, with its associated hospital, medical, service and educational programs, remained of the truly remarkable, extensive and sophisticated medical program that had earlier been organized by the MBs in the area.

This Center, however, continued to thrive, still the best in the rural area neighboring Hyderabad to the south, and in 1977 alone, now entirely under Indian care, supervision and management, cared for some 50,000 patients, 70 percent of them from among the poorest and weakest sections of the region's population.

"A deserted child brought to Miss Katharina Lobrenz." (CMBS Fresno)



"The same child, Martha, after some months with Katharina Lobrenz." (CMBS Fresno)



Patients waiting to be examined by missionary doctor Mary C. Wall (seated at table) and her staff at her hospital in Deverakonda 1955. (CMBS Fresno)



Missionary doctor Mary C. Wall giving a patient medicine, 1957. (CMBS Fresno)

So Near and Yet So far

"In India most of the babies are delivered at home in the villages by the village midwife. When the midwife fails, the expectant mother is taken by ox cart, sometimes many miles, to anyone who can help her. Many such difficult maternity cases were brought to me. How I feared these and prayed for wisdom to do the right thing. Finally, in 1951, a mission doctor came to us and built a hospital in Jadcherla. We nurses welcomed this and thanked the Lord for help and relief in the medical field.

"One afternoon just after the arrival of our new doctor a difficult maternity case was brought to me. The mother couldn't deliver. Upon examining and observing her it was very evident that this was a case for our doctor. It was raining hard but we had a good van and could easily take her the twenty-five miles. We drove through puddles, splashing water on all sides as we slipped and slid on the muddy dirt road. All the way I encouraged Ballamma, our patient, saying: 'We're almost there.' 'Only four more miles.' And so on. My heart became light. Soon I would be able to give my charge over to our doctor.

"Then the car stopped. Car trouble? No, the road was covered with three to four feet of water and the driver said there was no way we could get through. So near and yet so far! Our hearts, especially Ballamma's and mine, sank in fear and disappointment.

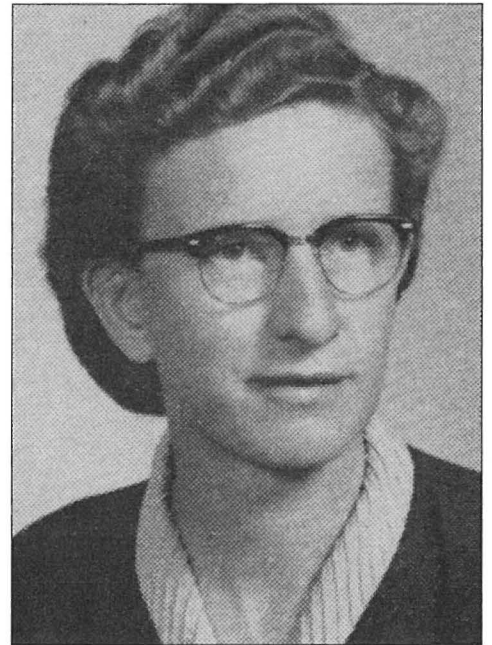
"There was nothing to do but to slip and slide back on the watery, muddy road. My mind raced. What could I do? It was 3 a.m. I needed rest. So did Ballamma. I put Ballamma back into her bed, gave her an injection for her pain and, with a prayer, left her until morning.

"In the morning Ballamma's face was haggard and tense but she, like I, had slept a little. I prayed with and for her and said, 'Ballamma, now it is up to you and me and God.'

"I warned Ballamma that I could not guarantee a live baby. I applied the forceps with difficulty and had one of my nurse's aides help me pull. Ballamma pushed. After some time the baby's head appeared and to my surprise the baby boy gave a hearty lusty cry. A healthy and normal baby!

"We have a God who answers prayers!"

Rosella Toews was a missionary in India 1946 to 1971, later a missionary to Bangladesh. The lines above were adapted from her article, "MB Medical Missions" (mimeographed 1953, archives, CMBS Fresno).



Rosella Toews (CMBS Fresno)

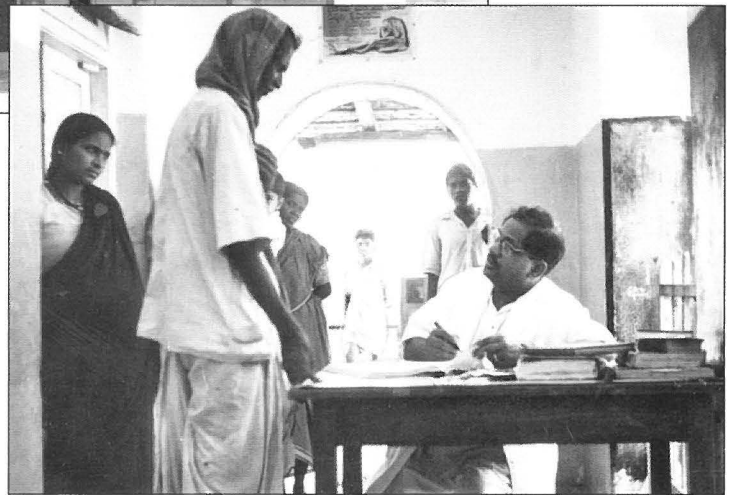


Pictured with Dr. Jake Friesen (center) are some of the hospital workers from all of the MB mission stations with hospitals in 1954 (hospital nurses were not present when this picture was taken). (CMBS Fresno)



The hospital on the mission compound in Wanaparthi. (CMBS Fresno)

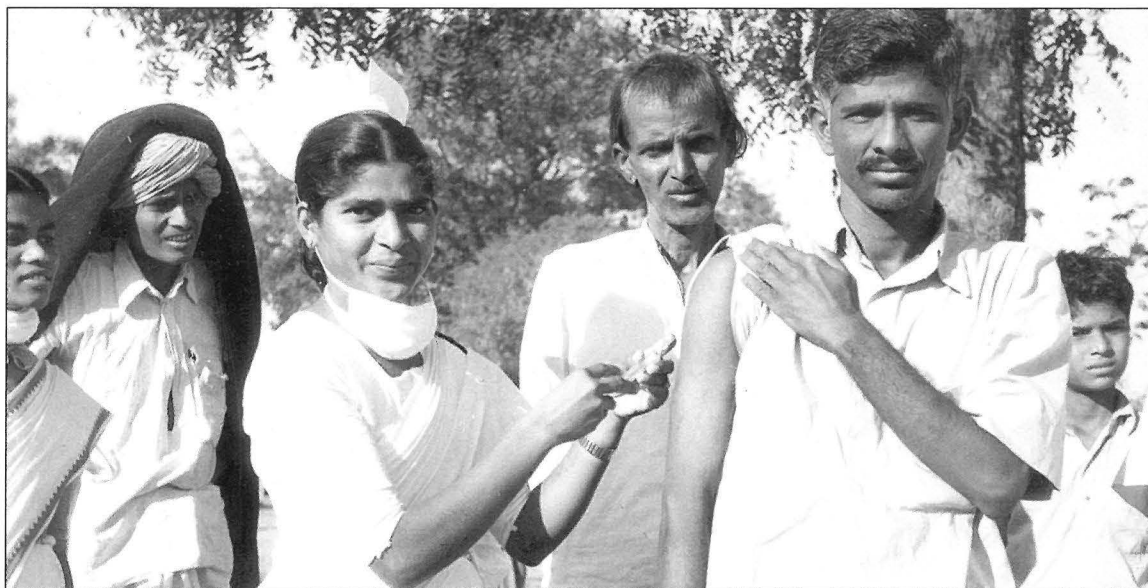
"Dr. P. B. Isaac, medical practitioner, seeing patients in Wanaparthi." (CMBS Fresno)



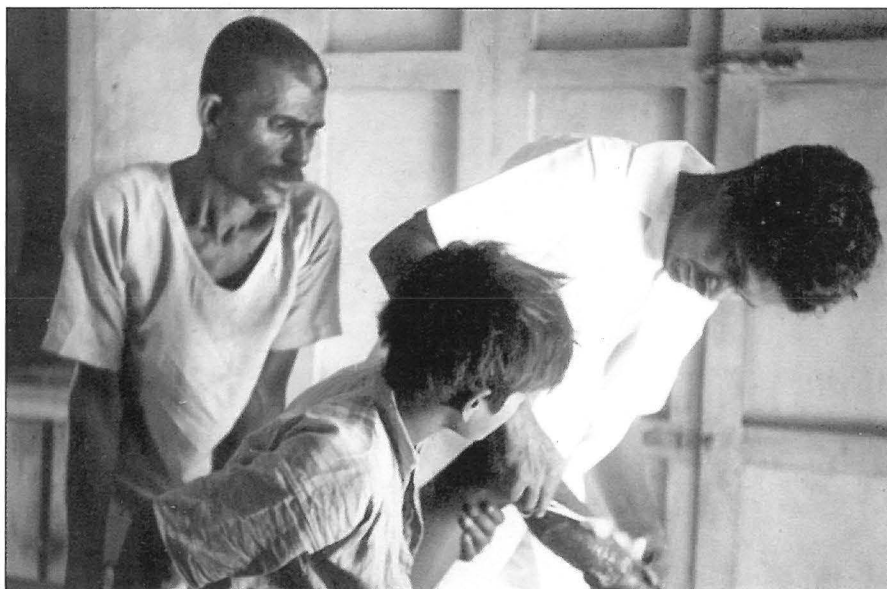
Some of the wards for patients on the Wanaparthi hospital compound. (CMBS Fresno)



*Nurse Suseela giving
injections to tuberculosis
patients in Jadcherla.
(CMBS Fresno)*



*Compounder Simon
treating sores on a young
patient's leg, Wanaparthy,
1958. (CMBS Fresno)*



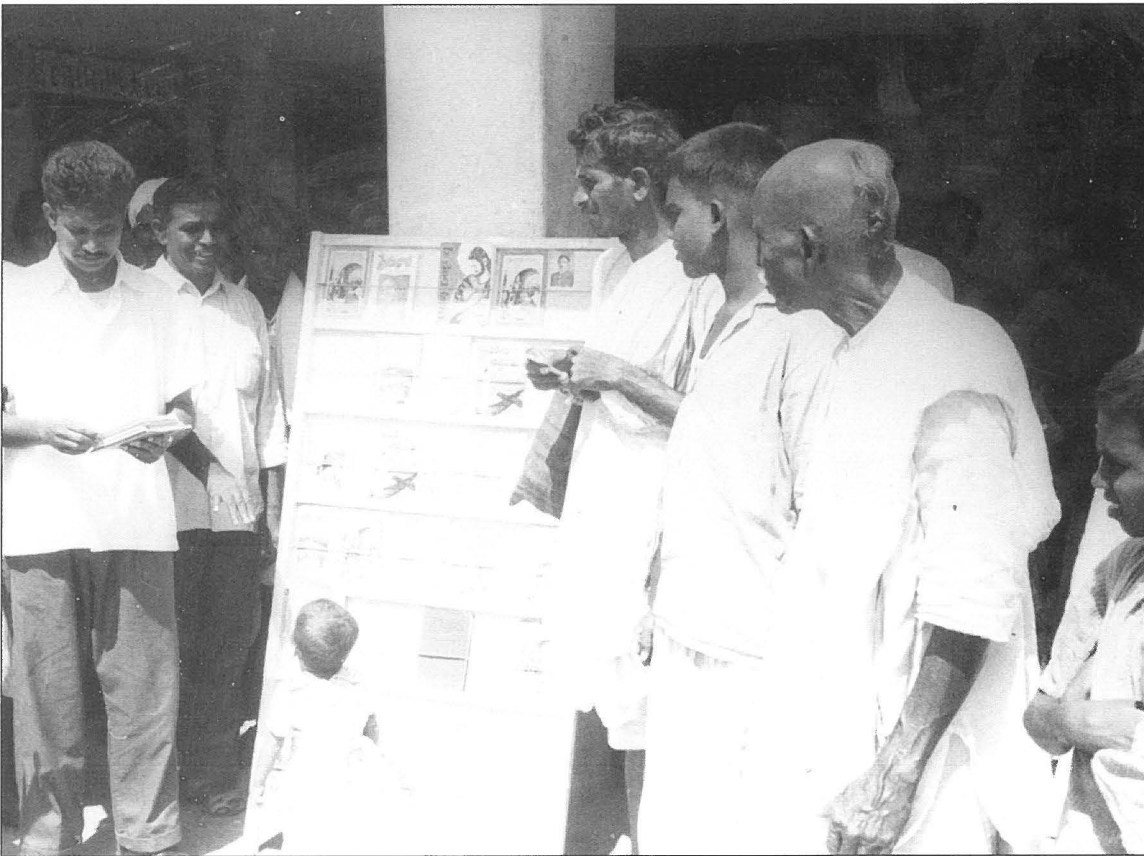
*First year nursing class
receiving caps, about 1963
(left to right): (first row)
Regina Suderman
(teacher), K. R.
Chendraneela, D.
Manoharama, V. P.
Katulya, Rosella Toews
(teacher); (second row) J.
Kelly (teacher), E.
Sowbagyama, G.
Gnanamani, G. C.
Sowbagyama, G.
Sugnana, M. P. Esther,
Frieda Neufeld (teacher).
(CMBS Fresno)*



Literacy and Adult Education



Missionary Elizabeth Balzer handing out literature in a village between Kalvakurty and Deverakonda. (CMBS Fresno)



Encouraging literacy and learning among patients at the hospital in Jadcherla, 1963. (CMBS Fresno)



*Adult education in the
Gadval area, about 1952.
(CMBS Fresno)*

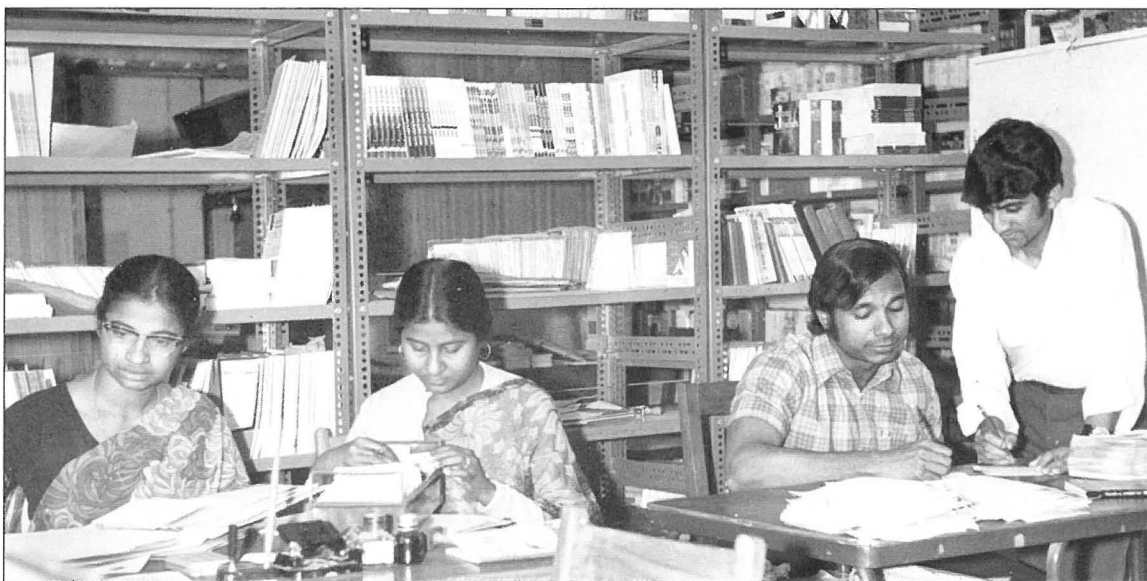


*Participants in an adult
literacy institute in the
MB church area,
September 1965.
(CMBS Fresno)*

Printing and Publications



Manager B. Asbeervadam (seated, facing the camera) proof reading copy with Mr. Daniel (seated opposite), while typesetters and machine operators (left to right) Messrs. Gaus, Augustine, Daniel, Samuel and Halim work alongside, in the MB press, in Mahbubnagar. (CMBS Fresno)



Producing and distributing materials for literacy education and further learning. (CMBS Fresno)

Music

The Hughestown Bethel Church youth choir, 1957 (left to right): sitting K. D. Jayasurya, K. D. Prabbakar; (seated on chairs) Mrs. B. B. Shantha Bai, K. J. Kalavathy, Maria Lohrenz, J. H. Lohrenz, J. L. Marthama, Mrs. C. C. Shantama; (third row) B. B. Kalanandan, K. S. Sunder Raj, I. J. Lemuel, B. S. Michael, V. S. Aristharcus, E. D. Nithyanandam, P. B. Richard; (back row); P. B. Arthur, V. S. Samuel, G. D. Prasadam. (CMBS Fresno)



Learning to play in concert under the giant banyan tree near Mabbubnagar, about 1970. (CMBS Fresno)

Radio Broadcasting & Leadership Training



Recording for radio broadcasting. (CMBS Fresno)



Lead pastors Aaron Kelly and G. Lazarus presiding, with missionary Julius Kasper standing in the middle left background, candidates are questioned prior to their baptism, in Nagarkurnool, in 1949. (CMBS Fresno)

Breaking Down Domestic Walls

"The mission of the church has to be redefined. The church has not provided the diverse communities of India with the full ministry as yet. We have to extend ourselves into university campuses, factories and among intellectuals. We have to evolve also in a full and meaningful dialogue with Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. The church has been defective in the 'sent-ness' of the faith.

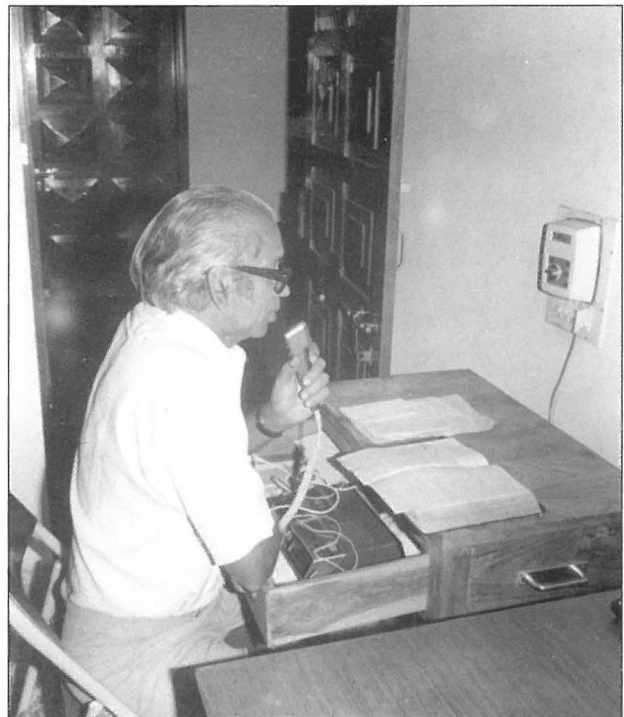
"There has been an attempt on the part of our Hindu neighbors to revive their religion by way of developing their philosophy in order to make it look universally relevant. Serving non-Christians in love has become our crucial issue.

"We are beginning to see that the witness of the gospel is not only in the sphere of religious argument but in other spheres as well. As Rev. Kulandran pointed out in India very recently. 'The Church confronts man not merely in his religious setting but in his setting in the world of everyday life.'

"Individuals face problems and issues not merely as individuals but necessarily also as members of one or another of the cast groups separated from each other by narrow 'domestic walls.' It is in the midst of issues that we lead most of our lives.

"Our churches up until now have tended to see individuals. We have tended to think that the church had nothing to do with those issues which a member of an ethnic group faces. A person taken out of the setting in which he or she lives is an unreal person, an imaginary person. We serve no purpose in preaching to such a person individually."

The MB church in India, like other churches in India, has all along been constrained in ways by some of the "walls" within Indian civilization. All along spokespersons within the MB church in India have simultaneously spoken out against the tendency to "domesticate" the gospel narrowly within any particular grouping. One of the chief such spokespersons since the middle 1950s has been the Rev. R. R. K. Murthy, quoted above (from a report submitted to the Board of Missions and Services of the MB Church of North America, Hillsboro, Kansas, dated 9 October 1973), an outstanding and widely reputed minister of the gospel, missions thinker, writer and teacher.



Rev. R. R. K. Murthy broadcasting. (CMBS Fresno)

Epilogue

Social differences in our world in days past — those pictured here from the 1920s — were often as striking as they are in our world today. (FA)

The picture below from the 1920s is worth many words. It shows relatively well-to-do boys and men standing on the veranda of the mission bungalow in back, and, in front, a group of very poor, ill fed and ill clad men, women and children, some with their hands extended in anticipation of receiving whatever is being offered, likely a coin or two, by the well dressed missionary.*

The men in back, most of them still in traditional gear, are no doubt already familiar with at least some of the ways of the missionary and his family, and their co-missioners, on



* The missionary pictured might be our father (he would have been about the age of the missionary pictured in the late 1920s), but we cannot be certain.



Ready for baptism "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" into the "body of Christ." (FA)

their compound. Indeed two of the boys, alert or alerted to what is now presaged, already sport neckties.

The people in front are perhaps members of a migrant group on their way through, in any case, people in need of sustenance. Without a doubt they are members of one or another of the groups marginal to the mainstream rounds of the villages with which they are associated, marginal either at the edges, or the bottom, of the social systems in place.

Finally, the missionary, protected from the noonday sun by his pith helmet and from any ready identification with any local social or cultural patterns by his style of dress, and however much under scrutiny, is clearly on the giving side in what is taking place.

Now this picture of ours is just a picture of a particular combination of people at a particular time and in a particular place. As we have seen, the mission work of the MBs in India had countless faces in addition to the face here.

But peculiar as it is, our picture is reflective of the many differences — dress, income, lifestyle, social standing, political wherewithal, understandings of the world and relationships with outsiders — at work in the encounter that took place between the

The Reverends R. S. Lemuel, M. C. Laban and Ted Fast leading in communion, 1982. (CMBS Fresno)



missionaries who came from Russia and North America and the Telugu people. And beyond a doubt such differences were at work in what subsequently transpired, sometimes leading to the debunking of the entire missionary effort, sometimes leading to practical and other conjectures about how relationships develop across the more significant social and cultural divides of our world, sometimes leading to understandings anew about how motivations mix in human decision making.

But however important income, political clout and other variables in the emergence and growth of the MB church in India, something else was also involved. And this something else, which made all the difference, was the gospel: the gospel that calls us, whatever our differences, whatever our limitations, to stand together in the grace of God in support of all that's honest, true and of good report; the gospel that calls us, whoever we are, to name others, more importantly to treat others, as our "brothers" and "sisters;" the gospel that calls us to service not judgment in our relationships with others; the gospel that calls us to recognize that God has come to us in the life, person and teachings of Jesus Christ, dwells among us, and comes again and again to us, whether we like it or not.

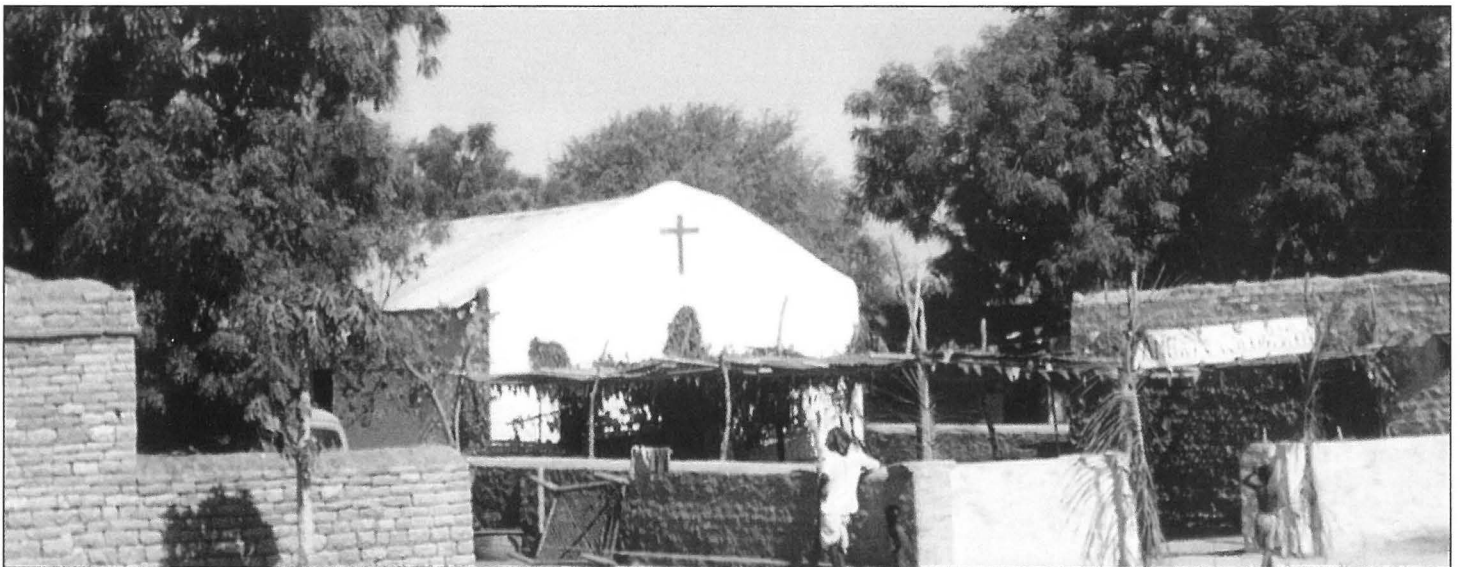
How else to explain the ongoing growth of the MB church in India, more rapidly following the departure of the missionaries than before (into more than 800 congregations in the old MB mission area by 2009)?

How else to explain the ties that bind the India church into the church around the world, with all that this can mean (to follow the lead of the first Mennonite Menno Simons in his description of what "true evangelical faith" is all about) in the clothing of the naked, the feeding of the hungry, the comforting of the sorrowful, the sheltering of the destitute and the healing of the sick and wounded?

How else to explain one common, binding and everlasting affiliation in the face of all the competing calls for affiliation and identification in an all too frequently badly divided world?

All in another day of the Lord.

The church in the village of Chinnachintakunta, about, 1970. (EA)





John and Viola Wiebe wading in the Bay of Bengal, 1963. (FA)



Looking to tomorrow: some of the 500 or so primary school age children who attend Sunday school Sunday mornings at the MB church in Anarabihita, their church to the right in the background, their church's new Sunday school/primary school under construction to the left (on the church's grounds), 2010. (Shaik Mahinood)

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From the Foreword by Werner Kroeker

The missionaries pictured in this book came to India between 1899 and the middle 1970s. They came to a culture vastly different from their own. They came from farm and small town backgrounds in a democratic North America to a colonial world where most of the villagers were very poor and lived within a system of castes that stretched back into antiquity and limited their activities.

The missionaries came as evangelists and preachers, teachers and doctors. Their educational backgrounds varied. Some came broadly trained, others with special skills. Some mastered the language of the people. Others greatly amused their hearers when they spoke it.

Pictures cannot tell the whole story of the times of the missionaries. But they help us understand better how a land once very far away and different from ours has become so much more familiar, how such a land's peoples and we, who not so long ago were isolated from each other, increasingly come to share experiences. Far beyond what was ever intended or imagined, the work of the missionaries was a major factor in bringing about the changes we and people in India now take for granted.

The message and work of the missionaries, the Holy Spirit working with them, challenged a time honored and deeply engrained cultural and social system. More importantly it challenged the inner lives of those who heard. It not only gave its hearers hope for a better life in the present but also an eternal hope.

Paul and David Wiebe, twins, were born and reared in India along with their siblings by missionary parents and grandparents, John A. and Viola C. Wiebe and Daniel F. and Anna Suderman Bergthold, and have returned to India many times over the course of their careers, Paul (PhD) as an educator, David (MD) as an orthopedic surgeon.



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